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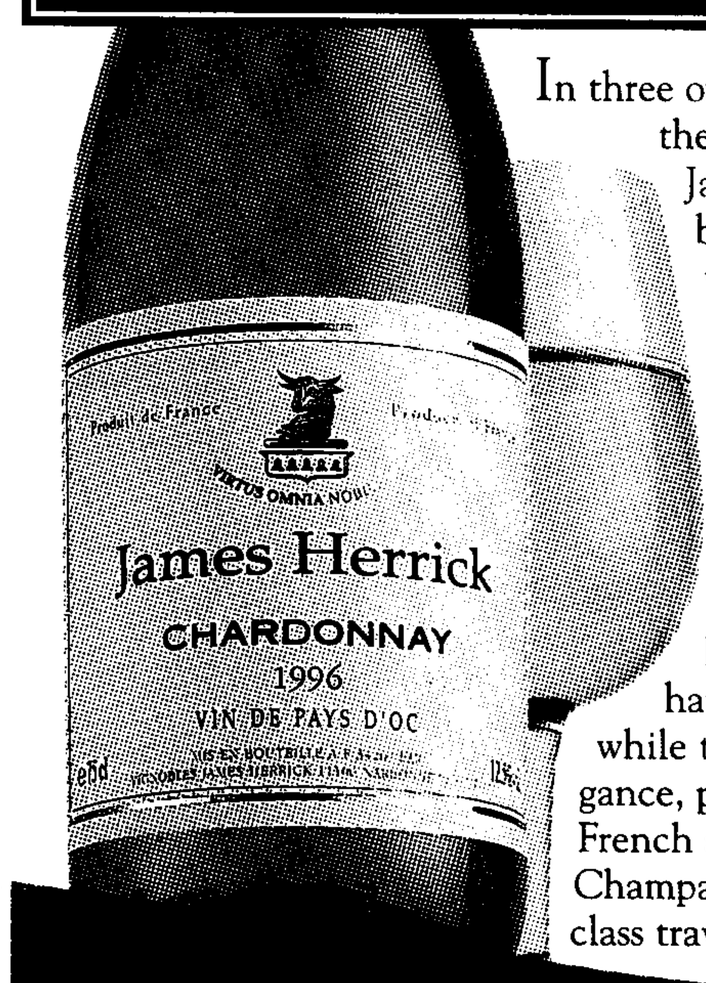

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Gnome

An Apology

IN the last few years the Daily Gnomograph may have inadvertently given the impression that it was in some way disillusioned with the Conservative Party and that it considered John Major as possibly unsuitable for the post of Prime Minister. Recent headlines such as "Major and Cabinet split over Europe" and "Resign you berks and let the Spice Girls take over" may have reinforced this impression and have led readers of the Daily Gnomograph to infer that this newspaper was unhappy with the performance of the current administration.

With the election getting dangerously near, we now realise that nothing could be further from the truth. What the hundreds of headlines, front-page articles and leader columns were actually trying to say was that John Major and the Conservatives are the most extraordinarily successful government of any country in the history of the world and that it would be sheer madness to let the communists in the Labour Party ruin this extraordinary record of 18 years of consistent achievement.

We are sorry for any confusion that may have been caused by our articles and are happy to take this opportunity to say "Vote Conservative".

E. Strobes
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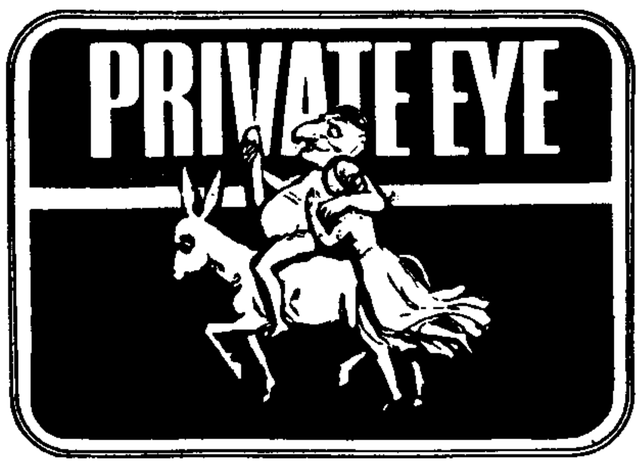


COLOUR SECTION

SIR Gordon Downey, parliamentary commissioner for standards, had a much closer relationship to Sir Michael Grylls, the Tory MP for North West Surrey who was vigorously questioned in Sir Gordon's recent cash-for-questions interrogation, than has previously been revealed.

Sir Gordon was chairman of the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Association (Fimbra) between 1990 and 1993. Fimbra's parliamentary adviser between 1992 and 1993 was Sir Michael Grylls, although curiously Sir Michael does not mention this role in the register of members' interests published in December 1992.

Sir Michael was closely questioned by Nigel Pleming QC, for the Downey inquiry, as to all the money he had received from Ian Greer Associates for "introducing" clients. But somehow he wasn't asked a single question about how he came to be parliamentary consultant to an organisation whose job was to clean up financial services and whose chairman was, er, Sir Gordon Downey.

PS: After his years at Fimbra, Sir Gordon was promoted to be chairman of the Personal Investment Authority. He was only in the post for nine months before resigning. Why did he resign? The *Daily Express* (29 September 1993) had one explanation: "Industry sources say he was forced to go because of widespread concern at the slow pace of the new watchdog's progress." The criticism that his pace is too slow appears to have pursued him to the Commons.

THE moment when John Major and Co apparently decided to rid themselves of Neil Hamilton was the publication at midnight on 29 March of the *Sunday Telegraph*.

Until then Tory leaders had hoped Hamilton was at least partially telling the truth and that parliamentary standards commissioner Sir Gordon Downey had indeed heard evidence which proved his innocence and the *Guardian*'s guilt.

Hamilton was encouraged on all sides to break the rules and publish the evidence given in secret by Mohamed Fayed to Sir Gordon. His main backers were the *Telegraph* newspapers, whose editors and columnists (including Tory candidate Boris Johnson) had proclaimed ad nauseam that Hamilton was innocent until proven guilty.

The *Daily Telegraph* lambasted the *Guardian* for publishing secret Downey evidence, and then the *Sunday Telegraph*, proclaiming a scoop, published... secret Downey evidence. Unfortunately the "Fayed tapes" stood up the *Guardian* allegations against Hamilton in every particular. The cupboard which had been so enthusiastically opened was utterly bare.

As soon as he saw the *Sunday Telegraph* scoop, Major realised the "Hamilton is innocent" game was up and unleashed a clutch of right wing Tory MPs (Teddy Taylor, John Townend) to send coded messages via the media to Hamilton to stand down. Major was initially minded to denounce Hamilton himself, but was dissuaded by his new confidant, Michael Portillo.

Portillo is a personal friend of Hamilton, and was a house guest at the sleazy MP's Cheshire home during the 1995 Tory party conference. He still hopes to save Hamilton's bacon, but he promised Major not to defend him publicly if Major also held back. This compromise cut Hamilton's public defenders down to one — his old mate from the far right, the former arms dealer and current Tory candidate for Aldershot, Gerald Howarth.

Howarth's lead letter to the *Daily Telegraph* on 26 March entitled THE HOUNDING OF HAMILTON ("monstrous injustice", "disgrace to the free press" etc, etc,) should be read carefully by anyone thinking of voting Conservative in Aldershot.

Meanwhile any Tory hopes that the sleaze issue will die down before the election have been dashed by the announcement from publisher Andre Deutsch that the memoirs of parliamentary lobbyist Ian Greer will be published on 24 April, a week before polling day. Deutsch is said to be still "struggling with lawyers" over several of Greer's more juicy revelations which apparently expands the circle of sleaze in the parliamentary Tory party into hitherto uncharted areas.

TORY MP and prospective candidate for Welwyn and Hatfield David Evans has been made to suffer much more than a public dressing-down from the prime minister for his colourful outburst in an interview to a local school magazine.

He has been sued by the six men wrongly convicted of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings for suggesting they were guilty after all. The tariff for this libel, previously retailed by the *Sun* and the *Sunday Telegraph*, has been rising rapidly recently; but Mr Evans was rather shocked when told that he could only settle the matter with a payment to each of the six of a sum not a million pounds less than £100,000. Luckily, he is a multi-millionaire and can well afford it.

***WORLD in Action*'s programme *Many Behaving Badly* set out to test the scruples of 25 MPs — but Granada was coy about revealing the full results of its scam.**

As a service to readers, however, the Eye is happy to do so.

The programme sent 75 letters to MPs, vicars and used car dealers purporting to come from the Honestly Furnishing Company. The spoof firm also sent cheques for £10.99 to each of the targets at their home addresses, along with a letter telling them they had been overcharged for some furnishings.

World in Action revealed that most of the car dealers cashed the cheques, some of the vicars cashed theirs but only six of the 25 MPs headed for the bank with theirs.

The *Eye* can reveal that the careless six were: Brian Mawhinney (Conservative party chairman); Tim Sainsbury (Tory MP and the richest man in the House); Paddy Ashdown (leader of the Lib Dems); David Steel (former leader of the Liberal Party); Daffyd Wigley (Plaid Cymru MP); and David "Dissembling" Willetts (paymaster-general until his hasty resignation in December).

● *Piers Merchant & The Sun* 6
● *The Great TV Debate* 8

"Wow! Incredible! Really brilliant!!!"

Street Of Shame

THE starting price offered by the *Sun* for the Piers Merchant/Anna Cox saga was £25,000.

Cox's mysterious agent, a middleaged woman, was told this could rise to £50,000, however, if the "right pictures" could be taken. Asked what the "right pictures" might be, the *Sun*'s representative suggested snapping the loving couple cavorting in an open space, and entering and leaving a flat. All this was duly arranged and the £50,000 paid over.

MORE detail has emerged of the nocturnal activities of Tory MP Piers Merchant, the one who formed a mould-breaking political alliance with a Soho nightclub hostess.

The Beckenham MP's recipe for a good night's sleep, the *Orpington & Chislehurst Leader* reveals, is "to go to bed with a good book. He says his ultimate luxury would be a very large bed..."

Merchant spilled the beans in a survey by The Sleep Council, presumably before ridiculous claims were made about how he has been spending the election campaign with his hand up the skirt of young Anna Cox on a park bench in broad daylight, at his flat in London, etc.

According to the survey Merchant will be in bed by midnight each evening during the campaign, an hour earlier than normal. The Sleep Council's spokesman was surprised, however, to learn that Merchant generally sleeps very well. "He says his mattress is 10 to 15 years old — basically it has had it!" — unlike his mistress who is 17 years old and still has the energy to talk to the *Sun* after a night of rumpy pumpy.

***EYE* readers will recall this is not the first public embarrassment for Mr Merchant. In 1988 he appeared as witness in a libel action brought by Anthony Gilberthorpe, a Gloucester county councillor, who had worked as a researcher for Merchant when the latter was a Tory MP for Newcastle.**

The case revolved around a telephone conversation between Gilberthorpe and a Gloucester news agency. Gilberthorpe's version was supported by Merchant, who said he was in a hotel room with his researcher when the call to the agency was made. This version depended heavily on Merchant's evidence which the jury naturally accepted.

They awarded Gilberthorpe nearly £50,000 damages against three newspapers (see *Eye* 690), but he never got the money. The newspapers appealed and dug out new information which cast doubt on the Gilberthorpe-Merchant version of events. Mr Gilberthorpe delayed and delayed, and eventually last year the case was settled before it got to court. The newspapers paid not a penny of the £50,000 damages and contributed £5,000 to Gilberthorpe's costs which left him very much out of pocket — and Mr Merchant with egg all over his face.

WHEN political and Insight hacks from the *Sunday Times* met at the Groucho club to discuss how to cover the election campaign — and on whom to dish the dirt — someone asked a jolly awkward question: er, which *party* was the paper going to support?

Andrew Grice, political editor, looked completely vacant, proving that proprietor Rupert Murdoch hadn't yet issued his edict on the matter.

Michael Prescott piped up jokingly that all those who thought the paper should support Labour should raise their hands. To everyone's surprise Insight editor David Leppard threw up his hand. All eyes then turned to the slimy hack who, realizing his gaffe, lowered his hand and, cringing, mumbled that he was only joking. Other senior executives wisely stayed silent, waiting for their lord and master to tell them whom to support.

PERMAFROST relations between the *Guardian* and "new" Labour thawed recently with a princely visit to the paper's Farringdon Road HQ by the spin doctor formerly known as Peter Mandelson.

Mandy was in a jolly mood, uncharacteristically doling out praise for the organ's crusade against sleazy Tories to assembled hacks over lunch. "Carry on the good work," Mandy joshed until he was jolted by a question as to his likely reaction to any tales of Labour sleaze. Freezing conditions may yet return.

PIERS "Boy" Morgan — who decamped to Jamaica to escape the stress of supervising the *Mirror*'s election coverage — is not the only tabloid editor to desert his post at this historic hour.

Stuart Higgins of the *Sun*, known as "Higgy the Human Sponge" because of his ability to soak up insults and bullying from his superiors, lived up to his nickname by obeying the Dirty Digger's order to endorse "new" Labour, against his better judgment. Duty done, he then jetted off last weekend for a skiing holiday. And where do you think an editor of the saucy *Sun* would go? Er, to the appropriately-named Beaver Creek in Colorado, of course.

"Hello, darling – what do you do for a living?"

EVERY morning visitors to Kensington Gardens are treated to a most comical sight — an elderly red-faced buffer and a glamorous Italian lady, both in blue tracksuits with white piping, striding along in a strange waddling gait half-way between a walk and a run. Small children point and giggle, unable to contain their incredulity. Passing tourists reach for their cameras to record the scene.

These spectators might be rather more respectful if they realised that they are in fact witnessing Paul "Loonybins" Johnson and Lady "Carla" Powell taking their morning exercise.

Paul is one of Carla's most devoted friends — which is why he blew a gasket when he discovered last month that Mohamed Fayed had gravely embarrassed the dear lady by recording a secret video of her off-the-record remarks about Margaret Thatcher. In a foam-flecked rant in the *Spectator*, Loonybins castigated Fayed and those hacks who had publicised Carla's indiscretions — particularly Peter McHackey of the *Daily Mail*, whom he described as a slimy piece of sewage.

In his original text Johnson went even further, hurling abuse at Charles Moore and Conrad Black — respectively the editor and owner of the *Daily Telegraph* — for having the temerity to employ one Sinclair McKay, son of McHackey, on the *Torygraph*'s Peterborough column. (In Johnson's theology, apparently, the sins of the father are always visited on the son.)

Since Conrad Black also happens to own the *Spectator*, the magazine's editor, Frank Johnson, wisely decided to remove this paragraph before publication. Johnson would do better in future to stick to safer subjects — like how much he loves the Spice Girls.

ENTRIES are pouring in for the *Guardian*'s Bad Press Awards — not least from the *Grauniad* itself, home of the typesetting cock-pu.

In the "best literal" section, the paper scaled new heights while gloating at the resignation of Tory MP Tim Smith. Half way through its front page editorial, Mr Smith became "Mr Shaw".

THE *Daily Mail*'s veteran Glenda, Lynda Lee-Potter, announced last week that she was in a state of "gibbering fury" about the appalling service offered by South West Trains — and no wonder, since she is a regular commuter on the Dorset-to-London line.

"The privatisation of British Rail was a monumental, short-sighted disaster," she raged, pinning the blame solely on "a government which lacked the foresight to appreciate its own destructive, stupid profligacy".

In her fury she forgot to mention the part played by the *Mail* itself in encouraging this fiasco. On 5 February 1996, for instance, a *Mail* editorial predicted that once BR had been broken up and sold to the private sector, "a sunny Monday morning should dawn when even Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells may be prevailed upon to admit that privatisation was just the ticket".

On 17 December, the *Mail*'s industrial correspondent David Norris wrote a gushing article promising that the new generation of rail entrepreneurs would "run services more efficiently and boost takings by attracting more passengers with innovatory ideas and improvements". As recently as 21 February this year, when the incompetence of South West Trains was already notorious, Martin Vander Weyer wrote a huge leader-page article rebuking the doubters: "Rail privatisation is beginning to look like a real success... There is a sense that rail is, at last, becoming a genuine service business rather than an engineering operation in which passengers are merely obstacles on the line."

When she next attacks the government for its "stupid" lack of foresight, perhaps Lee-Potter will let us know what she thinks of her own newspaper's brilliant prescience.

LORD Hollick's plummeting *Express* may be annihilating readers faster than the Black Death, but the paper has not forsaken quality.

Editor Richard "Monk" Adiss has signed a new columnist to do a "problem page": none other than multi-talented Tamara Beckwith, an "It Girl", whatever that is, and friend of Fleet's Street current champion wordsmith, Tara Palmer Tompkinson of the *Sunday Times*.

The first problem she will have to tackle is: Dear Tamara: why oh why is *The Express* so very, very bad?

CHARLES "Smoothy" Lewington got his big break in journalism when he was hired by Sir Nick Lloyd at the *Daily Express* and swiftly promoted through the ranks.

Now Lewington has risen to the giddy heights of "communications director" for the Conservative party, whereas his old boss has been sadly underemployed since departing from the *Express* a couple of years ago. But the story has a happy ending. Lewington has recruited a keen young hack to act as his "gopher" at Conservative central office during the election. Who is the lucky lad? Step forward... Sir Nicholas Lloyd.

IN another soaraway exclusive, the *Sun* revealed last week that Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe, blinded in a recent fight, has been banned from having a glass eye for fear that he might use it as a weapon.

As the deadline for the first edition loomed, however, the picture desk couldn't find a photo of a glass eye to illustrate the story. Whereupon a news-desk executive sidled up to *Sun* hack David Wooding: "Dave, do you want to help us with a piece?"

Of course, the eager beaver replied.

"Well then, could you take out your eye for us?"

Wooding, who lost the sight of one eye in a car crash many years ago, was then escorted to the lavatory where he removed his glassy orb and arranged it artistically on the basin for a *Sun* photographer.

Alas! After all these efforts, the photo was never used — apparently on the grounds that it might be too distressing for the *Sun*'s famously sensitive readers.

A MOVING leader in the *Mirror* on 26 March gallantly supported Labour's plans to legislate for the right to negotiate as a trade union if half the workforce vote for one. "This is simple democracy and a basic right," it drooled.

HYPOCRITICAL FACT TO REMEMBER: When the Montgomery management took over the *Mirror* in 1992, most *Mirror* journalists were members of a trade union which had negotiating rights with the management. These rights were totally ignored. Some 60 trade unionists, including almost all union officials, were sacked; and the union was rooted out as a negotiating force. In the modern *Mirror*, no union is allowed to organise let alone negotiate conditions.

ANOTHER HYPOCRITICAL FACT TO REMEMBER: Last year 281 staff at the Mirror Group's *Independent* and the *Independent on Sunday* were balloted. Of the 231 who returned their forms (80 percent), 227 favoured full collective bargaining rights for the National Union of Journalists — a yes vote of 97.4 percent. What *did the* caring Mirror Group do? It said "piss off" and stuck with individual contracts.

"You're new to the S&M scene, aren't you?"

MOVING STORY

SINCE the *Eye* printed numerous grumbles of customers of the removal firm Pickfords, one complainant has been taking the company to court.

Kristina Sheffield was appalled when only a part of her goods turned up on the agreed delivery date. Pickfords offered to deliver again, but sent a sub-contractor who arrived at Ms Sheffield's property so late she had already left on holiday.

Pickfords "guarantee" that in such circumstances furniture will be put back into store. But the sub-contractor merely dumped the goods in Ms Sheffield's front garden. After a fortnight's holiday Ms Sheffield returned to find most of her belongings stolen and the rest damaged by the elements.

Last week the appeal court ruled in her favour on a technical point in a case of breach of contract and negligence that she brought against the removal firm. She now waits to see if this will lead to compensation for her lost goods.

PLAGIARISM

THE stunning success of Somerset schoolboy Richard Belcher in conning the judges of the Hansard Society's Young Political Writer of the Year award by plagiarising a recent article in the *Economist* caused great glee at Clifton public school, Bristol.

Young Belcher was recently "excluded" from Clifton after some imaginative handling of schoolmates' cheques. From there he made his way to Blackwell, a state school, where he conned one of the teachers into authorising as all his own work (and thus a legitimate entry for the Hansard Society's annual award) a boring piece about Michael Portillo by "Bagehot" (David Lipsey) in the *Economist*.

The piece was picked as the best of 800 entries. The prize was £500 — £300 to Blackwell school, which the school has paid back, and £200 to Belcher, which he has spent. There is talk of suing him for the money, but the real point of the story is that 20 distinguished journalists and teachers who acted as judges clearly don't read the *Economist*. These included Sir Stephen Tumim, Jill Dando, John Carvel and even Vernon Bogdanov, the learned Oxford pundit who writes for, er, the *Economist*.

HALLO! THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN

HALLO! THE Prince of Wales, predictably, did his customary disappearing act when something unpleasant was about to happen in his own household — ie the ruthless firing of his devoted assistant, Miss Tiggy Legge-Bourke.

The gutless Brian left it to private secretary Stephen Lamport to inform the distraught gel she was to be out by Easter Monday. Brian simply absented himself abroad (as he did at the time of the "shedding" of his former private secretary Richard Aylard). This time he fled to Paris, then on to a Tanzanian safari with William and Harry — a jaunt "Tiggy" had been due to make.

But the wretched girl is Brian's sacrificial victim to the demented Diana — part of his hypocritical attempt to hoodwink the public that he and Diana can bear the sight of each other.

HALLO! I FEAR for the sanity of my old chum Bob Geldof, czar of TV company Planet 24. All employees have been issued with a four point contract to sign about not speaking to the press, which includes the clause: "All employees who have friends who are journalists will be dismissed immediately if it emerges that they have spoken to their friends about Planet 24 business."

I hope this will not inhibit my cherished *tête-à-têtes* with Bob about all his terrible troubles as a TV mogul.

CHICHESTER FESTIVAL THEATRE
PETER BOWELS
CARMAN HENRY
SILVERA McGEE
ERIC SYKES
in
THE SCHOOL FOR WIVES
Daily Telegraph

HALLO! *HOW, le tout Londres has been asking, has my dire rival OK! been able to pay £1m to Michael Jackson for those charming pictures of the "restructured" pop star and his winsome neonate?*

Could it be anything to do with the fact that the publishers, Northern and Shell, purvey a distinguished range of pornographic journals, including the innovative New Talent, where readers send in home snaps of their nearest and dearest in exotic poses.

Almost as obscene, one rather felt, as those photos of "Wacko Jacko" and his latest toy accessory.

HALLO! AVON Lady Mary Baker, charming wife of former Tory party chairman Kenneth, has impeccable taste (apart from Kenneth, that is). So it is shameful that she and her philanthropic firm, Avon Cosmetics, should be under attack for sponsoring a rather amusing exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery.

Art snobs are furious that next month Avon is sponsoring *Five Centuries of Body Adornment in Britain* — even though this will be much more fun than boring portraits of politicians, writers and artists. Some, absurdly, even snivel that Mary is also a director of Lottery quango, Camelot — and that last month the National Portrait Gallery was awarded £11.9m of lottery funding.

HALLO! TO the absurd Roy Miles Gallery, Mayfair, where a vivacious launch for dear Dan Farson's autobiography is enlivened by the unexpected arrival of Ted Heath.

The Grocer, looking increasingly like a mummified Soviet leader, is wheeled round by a mysterious minder — until pushy PR person Liz Brewer (former clients include Ivana Trump) insists on being introduced to the old boy.

Faced with this dizzy socialite, our former PM mumbles: "We are on our way out." Then, suddenly animated, the Grocer simply turns back into the room to talk to... Gilbert and George!

HALLO! TO the Savoy, with Norma Major, Cherie Blair and Princess Diana, where we enjoy a slap-up nosh (something to do with bravery awards or something).

Sadly, when the military band, The Blues and Royals, strike up *Rule Britannia*, one is grieved to observe yet another example of the decline in national standards of patriotism and education. Of our trio of aspiring First Ladies, only one appears to know *all* the words. You guessed! It was, of course, sweet Cherie.

HALLO! CAMPAIGNING to restore her dignity, the Duchess of Fergiana jets to Spain as guest of the tasteful TV show *Sopresa! Sopresa!* She makes a right regal entrance — with ex-footballer Michael Robinson tastefully singing *God Save the Queen*.

Presenter Isabel, Iberia's answer to Cilla Black, wonders what she should call Fergiana (Duchess or Your Grace), but settles for the insultingly familiar Sarah. A young viewer gets the chance to put a question: "Should the private lives of royalty affect the political situation in Britain?"

Fergiana thunders: "I couldn't agree more. Why can't we have our private lives? Why can't we work on our marriages or separations in private? We don't have private lives because of the media. They follow us to the shops and supermarkets. It's not relevant. It's not important to the children of Bosnia."

Charmingly the duchess then presents everyone with a book or photo of herself. One was, however, relieved that she did not lower the tone by taking up Isabel's offer to attempt the *pasodoble* — and that La Fergiana fearlessly put the record straight about the British media never leaving her alone. So unlike distinguished Spanish TV shows like *Sopresa! Sopresa!*

HALLO! *EYEBROWS were raised when Mohamed Fayed donated £1m to the People's Trust, a deeply moral outfit that campaigns for honesty, decency and a commitment to the family. To ensure the trust doesn't deviate from its brief, the Marquesa can reveal, Fayed has also recruited a distinguished public figure to work one day a week in return for a generous retainer. Who is this elevated arbiter? I don't know, but I do have a photograph of him hard at work. And a heartwarming sight it makes, too.*

'The Marquesa'

ON THE HUSTINGS

NO SOONER has Westminster's drama department — responsible for such turkeys as *Irvine QC* and *Lord Holme and Away* — pulled the plug (for the time being at least) on Michael Dobbs' taut, suspenseful, presidential-style debate between the party leaders, than the boys in light entertainment schedule a hilarious romp starring their deputies.

Yes, the three stooges — Michael Heseltine, John Prescott and Alan Beith — are to get their own show on the BBC the Sunday before the election. Tory central office is already billing it as *Tarzan and the Apes*, but Labour's spin-doctors are determined Hezza isn't going to make a monkey out of their man and are planning to rehearse, rehearse and rehearse until Prescott gets his lines straight.

The problem is that the Labour deputy leader's own estimation of his strengths and weaknesses as a political communicator do not closely correspond to those of his party's presentation experts. He, for instance, wants to major on economic policy, a subject upon which he thinks himself an expert, having had a few tutorials from Lord Desai at the LSE. But Gordon Brown's pointy-headed adviser, Ed Balls, doubts whether the clumsily garrulous Prescott could ever get out the words "neo-classical endogenous growth theory" in the right order, let alone know what they mean.

Brown's team are also terrified of some careless, last-minute gaffe — three and a half billion pounds' worth of spending promises, say. Labour's backroom boys want Prescott to play to his strengths, which means... er... being thuggishly rude and objectionable. Just in case weeks of chatting-up confirmed Labour pensioners on his battle bus has made the old bugger go soft, they've written a few sample scenarios for him. Here's a sneak preview of one of them:

Hezza: I'm intrigued by Labour's plans to put Mr Prescott in charge of a so-called "mega-ministry" spanning several Whitehall departments. I think the public has a right to demand competence in its senior ministers. Is he up to it? *(Dodges hairy fist...)* Is he really up to it? *(Cackles maniacally, voice rising to triumphal crescendo...)* No, he isn't! Of course he isn't.

Prescott: I know 'ow I got my job, Michael, I was elected by the overwhelming majority of my party members. 'Ow did you get yours? By blackmailing yer boss... or at least selling yer support in 'is leadership election for a big office and another poncy title... that's right i'nt it? Say I'm wrong!

Prescott hates the script but is willing to swallow any indignity to see Labour elected. One day soon, though, that resentment will out...

'Urquhart'

MPs-for-hire continue brazenly to flout the new rules on sleaze in the Commons.

Last November Edward Wallis, chairman of Powergen, gave evidence to the Commons trade and industry select committee inquiry into regulation of the energy industry. He was given an easy ride and no one was softer in his questioning than Keith Hampson, Tory MP for Leeds North West and close aide to deputy premier Michael Heseltine. The MP was particularly critical of the regulator who "did not give any useful guidance" to Powergen over its proposed takeover of Midlands Electricity Plc.

By an odd coincidence Hampson is on the payroll of... Powergen, sitting in its pocket as consultant on "parliamentary, political and professional matters" raking in up to £15,000 a year.

During the hearings he admitted being an "adviser to Powergen", but he failed to absent himself from the sessions in which he had a direct commercial stake. Even worse, the MP actively participated. This was in clear breach of parliamentary rules which state: "When a member of a committee has a pecuniary interest which is directly affected by a particular inquiry... the member should stand aside from the committee proceedings relating to it."

Powergen was delighted with its treatment by the select committee and so no doubt Hampson's consultancy will be renewed. Whether the voters of Leeds North West will be so pleased is another matter.

AS we go to press today John Major is having an audience with the Queen to seek the disillusion of Parliament.
Greenock Telegraph

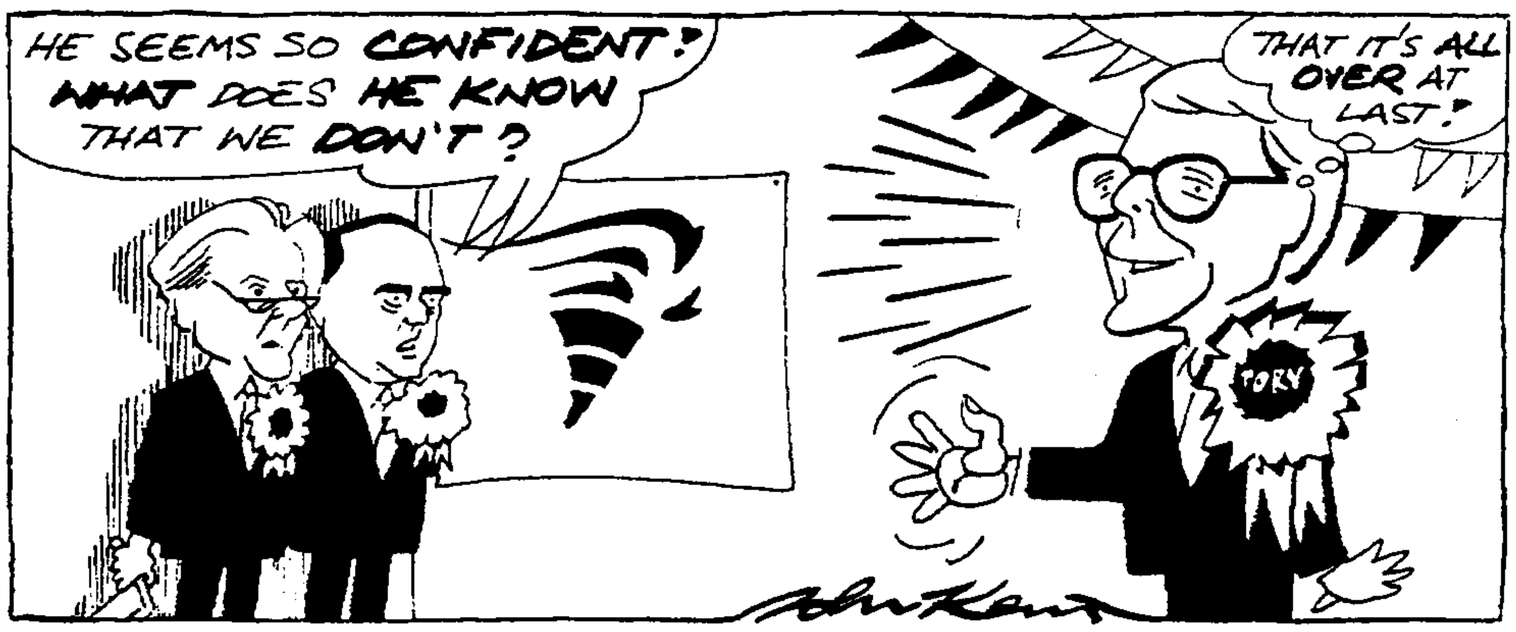
SCOTTISH secretary Michael Forsyth's denial that he will take over the Tory seat of disgraced legover MP Alan Stewart is more willingly accepted in Glasgow than the rest of the country.

Cynics believe that Tory central office will be desperate to get the capable Forsyth, whose own Stirling seat rests on a wafer-thin majority of 703, into the more comfortably Tory seat occupied by Stewart. But canny Glaswegians think he will resist: they have witnessed the extraordinary lengths Forsyth has gone to strengthen his position in Stirling.

Three new government-appointed bodies have set up their Scottish headquarters in Stirling in the last year after the Scottish office identified Stirling as their ideal location. Stirling Castle received a £20m grant from Historic Scotland as part of a 10-year, £100m-investment programme to bring tourism to the town, chaired by the Scottish office with the government's full backing.

The area's only opted-out school, St Mary's in Dunblane, has received a £575,000 repair and upgrade grant leaving the Labour-controlled local authority's 51 state schools to absorb cuts of £1.5m this year. Now a £3.5m grant has been given to build a new further education college in the town while nearby Clackmannan College in Forsyth's neighbouring constituency has had its grant slashed by more than £100,000.

Scottish office money, channelled through Priority Partnerships, has given £770,000 to Stirling, or £96,000 per district. Meanwhile Glasgow, which contains half Scotland's problem areas, receives just £21,000 per district.



JUST FANCY THAT!

Just how many times do Labour plan to betray the Scottish people... a union under the two-face New Labour Party is something we want absolutely nothing to do with.

— The Sun (Scottish edition), 13 March 1997.

Rise Now And Be A Nation Again — and get there using Labour as a stepping stone. We are throwing our weight behind the Labour Party at this election.

— The Sun (Scottish edition) 29 March 1997.

MORE TORY BOYS

A VERITABLE nest of Tory boy wonders is to be found at London PR outfit Market Force Communications.

Founder and managing director is 1985 Federation of Conservative Students chairman Mark MacGregor, now prospective parliamentary candidate for West Ham. He was elected chairman amid the ruins of Loughborough University after an FCS conference had been overrun with boozey far-right wingers intent on wrecking the place.

At the following year's Scarborough conference MacGregor announced: "The named individuals [thugs who had been threatened with expulsion by then Tory party chairman John Gummer] are back here. Your national officers are still in charge of a growing and vibrant organisation. I believe we have triumphed comrades." Later that same year the organisation was disbanded after it branded Harold Macmillan a war criminal.

MacGregor's Tory candidate colleagues at Market Force Communications are Russell Walter (PPC in Islwyn) and balding bachelor Paul Gray (PPC in Preston), both of whom subscribed to the FCS in its "Hang Nelson Mandela" and "Kill All Wets" days.

No wonder even Tory central office placed these former FCS luminaries in almost certainly unwinnable seats.

NETHEADS who visit the Conservative party's pisspoor website will find a spot-the-ball competition featuring a picture of John Major playing cricket in Harare. "Simply fill in the form below," browsers are advised, "then click on the picture in the spot where you think the ball should be."

Easier said than done: the man who took the photograph, Stewart Kendall, confirmed to the *Eye* last week that there was *no* ball in the original picture.

The last person to rig spot-the-ball competitions in this country was the late Robert Maxwell, who met his doom shortly afterwards. Is history about to repeat itself?

THE problems raised by the new City infatuation with Tony Blair are causing embarrassment at Royal SunAlliance, the newly-merged insurance giant.

The old Sun Alliance was a generous contributor to the Tories, while the Royal stopped making political contributions several years ago. Though thousands of employees in the new merged company face the sack, room has somehow been found for two chief executives: Richard Gamble from the Royal and Roger Taylor from Sun Alliance.

Taylor also happens to be president of the Horsham Conservative Party — but is very shy about this. A Tory spokesman at Horsham says: "He's not crazy about having any sort of political profile — what with the merger." Mr Taylor is apparently anxious not to embarrass senior colleagues who are falling over themselves to suck up to Tony Blair.

SMEAR OF THE WEEK

■ This is not intended as a smear, but Mr Mandelson's comment that the Tories were "playing politics with this whole idea", rather than "negotiating in good faith", did sound uncannily like a Sinn Fein statement.

— Janet Daley on Labour's withdrawal from negotiations for the Blair-Major TV debate, Daily Telegraph, 1 April.

'Backbiter'

NOOKS and CRANNIES

DEMOLITION, or even mutilation, is not the only way to wreck a fine building. A change of use can spoil it as well as save it, although a new — if appropriate — use is usually preferable to destruction.

Even so, experience suggests that churches are best kept as churches, and pubs as pubs. A case in point is the Lamb & Flag in Oxford, one of the city's oldest and best known pubs — as featured in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*.

It has been open in St Giles' since 1617, right opposite its owner, St John's College. And now the college has decided that it needs to convert the pub into student accommodation and has applied for planning permission and for change of use to Oxford city council. Christ's College, Cambridge, tried this with the celebrated galleried Eagle, and the result is a loss of a public amenity, even fewer pleasant *places to drink* and an even greater division between Town and Gown as yet more of the city becomes a purely university ghetto.

Oxbridge colleges are now big business, of course. Much more important than the comfort of students is the lucrative summer conference trade: how nice for Japanese academics to be housed in an historic 17th century inn.

Not that money is everything — the rent on the lease for the Lamb & Flag has not been adjusted for more than 40 years and is currently only £240 per annum. St John's, perhaps, might now ask a little more as the pub does a roaring trade. Yet the current lessee, Scottish Newcastle, is only offering £280 for a new lease. I wonder why? Perhaps because the brewers are disinclined to carry out necessary repair work on the listed building. But while that offer is on the table, no other brewery can bid for the poor old Lamb & Flag for six months. And by that time, if all goes well, St John's will have got planning permission to end four centuries of alcoholic consumption and thus to sanitise and sterilise yet more of the city.

THE fact is that historic buildings are never a problem, only their owners. There is the case of the Round House on Brogborough Hill in Bedfordshire, an extraordinary brick farmhouse built in 1647 at the time of the Civil War.

Once the wing to a long-demolished 16th century mansion and long neglected by its owners, London Brick, it was sold in 1993 for a mere £1,645 to Mr James Harris on condition that it be restored. Mr Harris, indeed, announced that he intended to restore the building and convert it into "an exclusive £500,000 country residence" by building a new dwelling house nearby on the site. "This was a project of love, not profit," claims Mr Harris. "A plan to restore the Round House for Britain and the people of Bedfordshire. I started this as a self-appointed agent of the people of Bedfordshire."

Unfortunately the elected authority for the people of Bedfordshire had other and possibly better views about the best way to preserve the house and where to put the new building, so, after interminable negotiations, nothing has happened. The burned-out shell of the Round House has suffered from frost damage and the main chimney stack and east wall have collapsed. And now it emerges that Mr Harris has no money to carry out the work: his contractor took away the temporary roof because he had not been paid and his architect is suing for £12,000 of unpaid fees.

Perhaps compulsory purchase by Bedfordshire council is the only way to save the listed building. Meanwhile, four years on, the poor Round House continues to crumble and may well be demolished as a dangerous structure. So the steady erosion of anything that is unusual or interesting in Britain continues.

ONCE again the choice of this year's RIBA's royal gold medallist shows that the institute merely approves of whatever is approved of. But with a jury graced by the likes of My Lord Palumbo, Sir Norman Foster and Michael Manser, what else can we expect?

The winner, Tadeo Ando, is one of those international superstars in architecture who obligingly scratch each others' backs and give each other medals. He does precious, contrived, introverted, anti-social buildings whose surfaces are consistently of raw grey concrete. "A consistent, spare and minimalist vocabulary has been assiduously followed throughout his distinguished career," announces the citation.

"He has not played around with the 'isms' of recent architecture..." — no, only the tired old "ism" of doctrinaire, international modernism.

How nice it would be if the RIBA gave its gong to a genuinely original talent who has done something unusual, popular and brave — like the extraordinary Macovecz of Hungary, who does amazing things with timber. But that would require courage and imagination on the part of the jury.

'Piloti'

"It doesn't 'ping' when I tap it."

COMPUTER NEWS

COMPUTER trouble at the Employment Service, where the Labour Market System database is causing headaches for staff at more than 1,000 Job Centres who are supposed to use it.

Computing magazine was leaked a letter from George Dodsworth, head of the Employment Service's IT division, in which he apologised for the poor service caused by unforeseen demands on the system and warned: "Those problems show on sign of immediate abatement... I accept that the present service is inadequate and we must improve it."

A few weeks later the Employment Service put out a press release on the LMS system. In it one George Dodsworth was quoted on the progress of LMS. He said the system had "performed extremely well" and "is now a critical enabler of the business". How strange!

Meanwhile bad news for Texas-based computer giant EDS (*Eyes passim*), whose running of the Child Support Agency's computer system — with masses of wrong assessments and a huge backlog of cases — prompted MPs last summer to call for it to be scrapped. (It was also criticised by the data protection registrar as it had been bought "off-the-shelf" and didn't reflect UK law on personal data.)

At the time the 10-year contract, running to 2003, was estimated to cost £600m. Now the Child Support Agency has finally announced that it is getting rid of the EDS system and replacing it with one developed as part of the DSS Corporate Information Systems Strategy. It will be introduced by 1999.

Pseuds Corner

Two outstanding opportunities have arisen for individuals of the highest calibre to contribute to the ongoing success of Microsoft, the world's leading business software organisation.

Technology Evangelist – In this key role you will convert potential customers into life-long Microsoft clients by evangelising the benefits of Microsoft's strategy and technology.

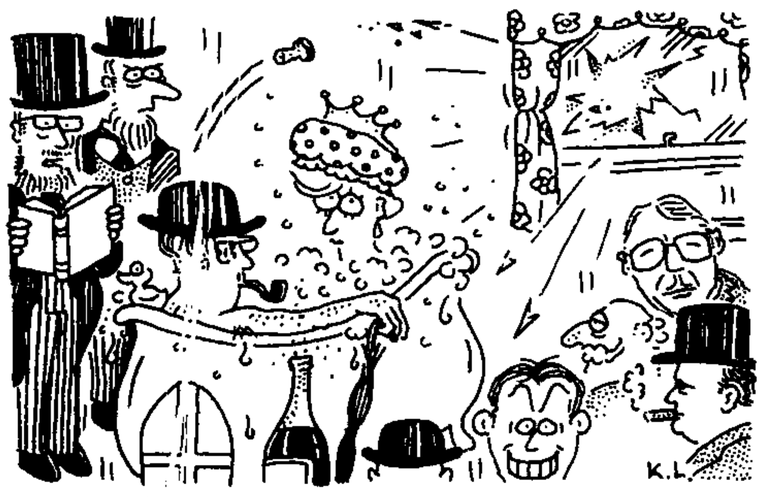
Microsoft advert
Sunday Times

When the semi-fraudulent credits of the last episode of *Brass Eye* began rolling up, I turned to the friend I had watched it with and we both said — almost in unison — it's a real privilege to be alive when people such as [Chris] Morris are at work. And as for his much-fêted reticence and unwillingness to be made into a 'personality' himself — well, you'd have to say that was the icing on the cake.

WILL SELF
Observer

What [Chris] Morris realises is that television isn't a 'medium' in any meaningful sense at all. Rather it's a skein of different media imprisoned in a bogus proscenium.

PAUL SUSSMAN
Big Issue



Reading this vibrant life of the writer-socialite-adventuress Marthe Bibesco is like bathing luxuriantly with a beautiful princess in a champagne-filled marble tub in a Mittel-European palace, being entertained by the great statesmen and writers of early 20th-century Europe — while, outside in the streets, a vicious Ruritanian revolution simmers.

SIMON SEBAG MONTEFIORE
(Review of 'Enchantress' by Christine Sutherland in the Observer)

... the main casualty will be the gasholders behind St Pancras and King's Cross. These monumental filigree iron structures provide a wonderful backdrop to the view looking north, and make the King's Cross railway lands a most remarkable industrial landscape. They are also of rare historical significance, being the oldest operation [sic] group of gasholders in Britain. In the "triplet" group, No 11 dates from 1861 and No 12 from 1867.

PILOTI
Private Eye

Virginia Cooper

Cinderella and Symbolisation: The Significance of Projective and Anticipatory Identification in Early Development

The folk/fairytale Cinderella has a four thousand year old history and indicates a paradigm that predates the rise of the fairytale and psychoanalysis. Patterns of a hypnogogic flow or destructuring and a hypnopompic flow or restructuring indicate the capacity to symbolise. Some aspects of projective identification act as a defence whereas anticipatory identification permits a prospective element. Symbol formation contains both regressive and progressive components which are essential for learning and growth.

Seminar
Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies,
University of Essex

CONTRIBUTORS: Mark Kerbey, Martin Bradley, Adrian Hallchurch, Jean Hiedsch, Guy Spooner, A.C. Haken.

£10 paid for entries

EYE TV

World in Action (Granada)
Panorama (BBC1)
Cutting Edge (Channel 4)

THE week before the television market gets even more crowded — with the launch, to those in the transmission areas who have managed to get their videos tuned, of Channel 5 — seemed an appropriate moment to check up on the existing terrestrial channels' main current affairs programmes. During the gradual commercialisation of the British schedules, the flagship journalism series have always proved useful as canaries down the coalmine.

So it's depressing to report that, in the last week of only four terrestrial channels, **World in Action** was found gasping for breath on the bottom of the cage. The show which once freed the Birmingham Six had turned its attentions to the activities of freelance wheel-clampers: investigative journalism meets *Top Gear*.

As is standard with *World in Action* these days, the report began with a few snappy soundbites. "It's a backstreet industry probably worth £150m a year," said a man sitting in a car. "I would be surprised if I had a day when I didn't get some kind of abuse," said another man. Then the sounds of Adam Ant's Stand and Deliver broke across the soundtrack. This was justified by another soundbite from a man from the RAC: "Many of the clampers are like modern-day highwaymen."

The documentary was a depressing mountain-from-molehill exercise. Grand captions like "Hidden Camera" and a curious vestigial reflex towards "balance" — a single soundbite from a parcel company which approved of clamping — could not disguise the fact that a reasonable six-minute item in a news magazine show had been stretched beyond its limits by making precisely the same points in five locations.

The geographical shifts were heavily underlined for the simpler viewer. "Next stop London," said the narrator, and the next three images were: Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, black taxis in formation. And we don't even know who to blame for this mess because — such are ITV's fears of viewers switching over to the other side — the show is now allowed only a single on-screen credit: "Produced by the *World in Action* team."

An hour later on BBC1, **Panorama** took on potentially the most vulgar of all current affairs subjects: abortion. The risks are obvious: shrill opposed soundbites from Catholics and feminists, filming trips to the American priests who tend graveyards of crosses for dead foetuses, footage of American election clinics being bombed. The viewer's nervousness was increased by the fact that *Panorama* has been showing signs of ratings-chasing strain recently. There was, for example, a rather over-sold and under-reported story on research about the effects of working mothers on children.

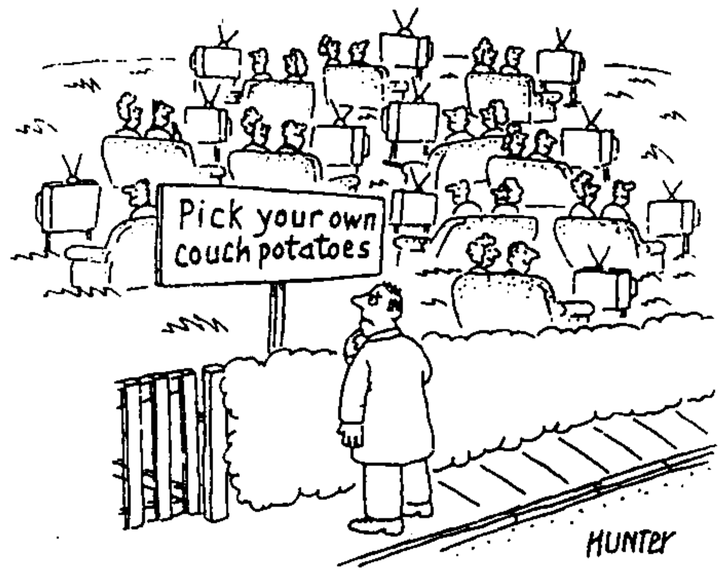
But, in the event, the *Panorama* film on abortion showed high seriousness and almost no shock tactics. Without even a single piece of footage from America, the programme impressively avoided the standard *Moral Maze*-like run-through of the pro and anti rants. A relatively new line was taken: the increasing resentment of British doctors at the way in which the state, though regarding terminations as a legal matter, throws all responsibility for decisions about performing them on to the medical profession.

In terms of the way it was made, this could have been a *Panorama* of 10 years ago. There was, however, a difference and a worrying one, given the working mothers affair. This was a partisan film. The viewer was left in little doubt that it was arguing for a further reduction in the abortion time-limit because of the medical advances in foetal viability. The argument was well-made but, just as increased competition seems to have driven *World in Action* towards banality, it seems to have pushed *Panorama* towards polemic. If so, its executives will need strong bottoms for the hours they will be spending in complaints tribunals.

On the same Monday night, over on Channel 4 another moral tale about the effects of deregulation on television journalism was unfolding. Paul Watson has been one of the best documentary film-makers of modern times: from *The Family* onwards. But **The Dinner Party**, his film for *Cutting Edge*, was depressing evidence of what a man now had to do to get his films on. Ludicrously over-hyped in advance with hopeful publicity about its "controversial" nature, this observational portrait of eight middleaged Suffolk chums eating dinner together was so loaded in the editing that you began to feel sympathy for these twits.

Notice, though, that *Cutting Edge* runs directly opposite *Panorama*, so that any downward tabloid shift at one would soon infect the other. And, from this week, Channel 5 will be running a nightly movie in this slot. As the battle for viewers intensifies, *World in Action*'s wheel-clamping programme may soon seem like a golden age of documentary.

'Square Eyes'



MEDIA NEWS

BBC news supremo Tony "Head Prefect" Hall has been weeding out on-screen hacks who do not meet his exacting standards of physical perfection.

First victim is the amply-proportioned Lawrie Margolis, hired as a TV reporter 10 years ago but now relegated to a desk-job in the newsroom. Unaware of the reason for his transfer, Margolis irritated his masters by repeatedly reapplying for his old job. Eventually he was taken aside by management apparatchik Ray "Gloomy" Gowdridge and told that his generous frame did not fit John Birt's vision of a youthful, thrusting news service.

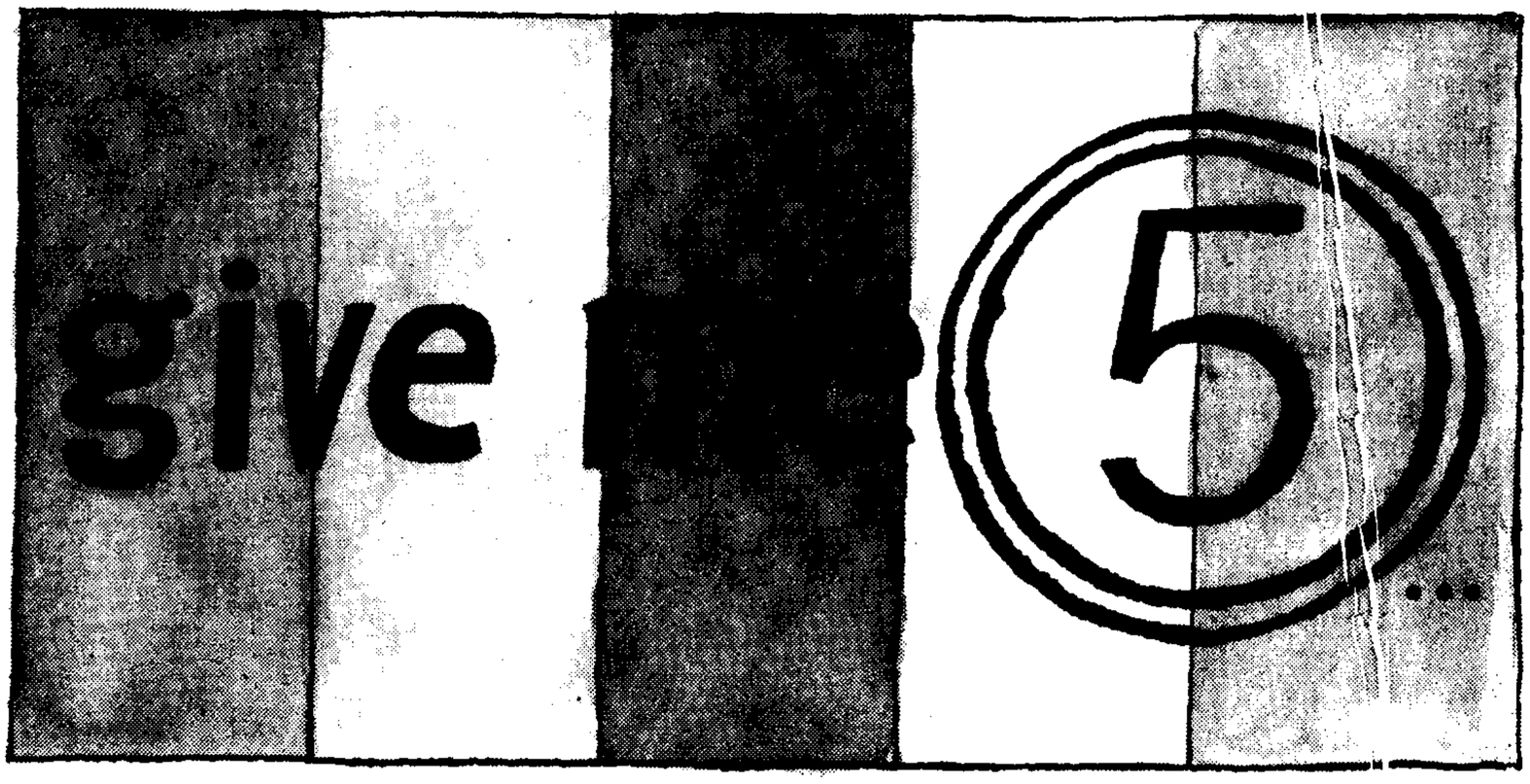
This has caused a big flutter in the BBC's Westminster hen-coop. Political editor John Sergeant is much-loved by viewers, but he is unlikely to be shortlisted in the Mr Universe contest; and political correspondent John Pienaar's swarthy, droopy-moustached features bear such a resemblance to Carlos the Jackal he has to run the gauntlet of alert airport security men every time he boards a plane. Both are now seeking assurances they won't be relieved of their posts after the election.

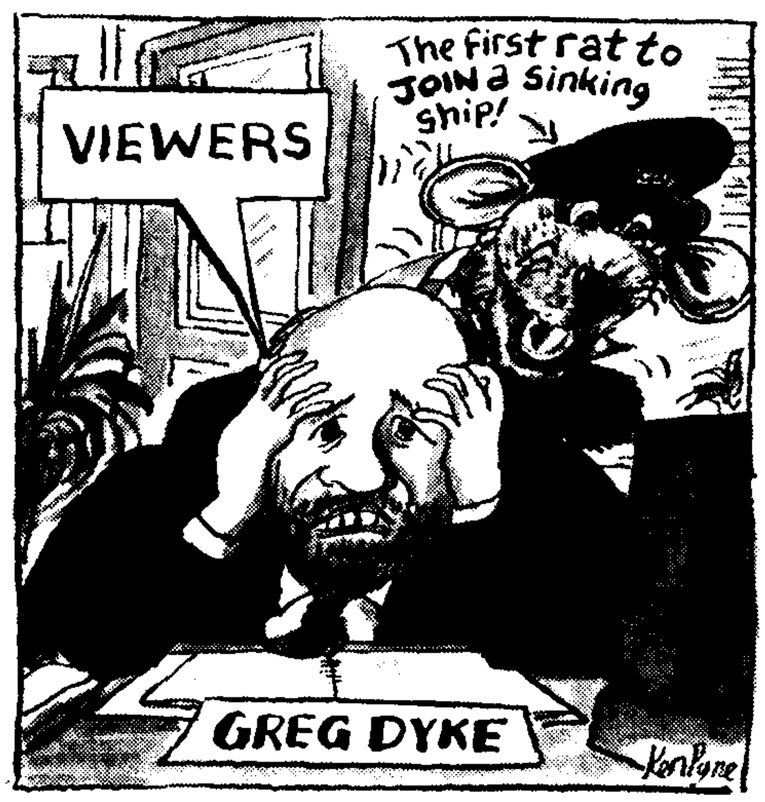
Hall made his name at the BBC as a proponent of Birt's theory of "specialist-led" journalism. Under his direction, many general hacks were sidelined or bullied into taking redundancy or early retirement to be replaced by fatly-paid Birt favourites such as Peter Jay and Polly Toynbee, backed by hordes of ever-changing minor "specialists". But not any more. Hall's other big idea for after the election is "a reduction in the number of specialist correspondents in favour of more general reporters".

LUNCHING with a Tory MP can be hazardous for a broadcaster's health, as Alastair Stewart found after one recent banquet.

Stewart, who was due to present *London Tonight*, was given a quite unwarranted bollocking by his ITV bosses after returning from lunch and insisting he was fit enough to go on air. After all, only two bottles of Chardonnay had been consumed.

Stewart, who also presents GMTV's *Sunday Best*, was fuelled by colleagues with coffee and was adamant the show should go on. But duller counsel prevailed from Carlton's dour bosses.





IT SHOULD come as no surprise to learn that Lord Hollick, a good socialist and Blair groupie, applies sound egalitarian principles to the management of his various interests.

At Anglia Television, for example, incentives are supposed to be on offer for efficient workers; but after sacking most of the staff Hollick has now decreed that no bonuses can be paid to the grumbling proles still left at the Norwich coalface. If they complain, the parsimonious peer can point out that he leads by example: this year he had to settle for a paltry £550,000 salary.

MEANWHILE there was great rejoicing in the Anglia newsroom when hacks realised that an unlamented former editor was among the *dramatis personae* of an incoming story.

One-time ITN hero Jeremy Hands had left Anglia a couple of years ago to go into "crisis *management*", opinion being that as he'd caused more than most he should be well qualified to recognise a crisis when it came along. Having persuaded Air UK on to his books, last month he organised a mock disaster (a supposed crash at Norwich airport), the aim being to test the reactions of airline staff.

Alas! The great communications expert had somehow overlooked the need to communicate with the people involved. The Norfolk & Norwich Hospital went on to full emergency alert when its switchboard was jammed with calls from trainee reporters pretending to be hacks from national newspapers inquiring about the "accident".

When the truth emerged, and the hospital authorities screamed blue murder, Hands flatly refused to talk to the hack-pack of which he was once such a distinguished member — even though in his Anglia days he would bawl and yell at any failure to secure an interview with the orchestrator of such a cock-up.

MANCHESTER's exciting new cable station Manchester L!ve, an offshoot of the pisspoor London-based L!ve TV, starts on 6 May under the tutelage of former Granada producer Adrian Moss. So can viewers expect the sort of Moss cock-up which still has them chuckling in Granadaland?

A while back he and a TV crew went to one of the city's most dangerous locations — Bernard Manning's Embassy Club — to film undercover with hidden cameras. Their aim was to flee once they had enough material and then shock the world on prime time news with their amazing finds. But the undercover team was rumbled when it was announced over the tannoy that a taxi had arrived for the crew from Granada TV.

Manning threw a wobbly and his "security" men seized the goods and threw Moss & Co on to the street. Granada has since been trying to retrieve its cameras with the help of m'learned friends — just the kind of story they could run on Manchester L!ve.

VIDEO NASTIES

THANKS to all those readers who have suggested ways of dealing with the 3.5 million unwanted Referendum party videos Sir James Goldsmith is shoving through UK letterboxes.

Mrs R.B. writes from Whitney-on-Wye in Herefordshire, regretting that her house only has a septic tank. This has prevented her "from being able to flush the video down the lavatory", which is where her husband says it belongs. Instead, said Mrs R.B: "We threw it in our builder's skip."

Meanwhile Mr P.B. from London SE25 — given the tape by an 81-year-old neighbour who doesn't have a video and thought she was being sent porn by post — is doctoring his 12-minute tape to try to record highlights from the Cartoon Network.

Elsewhere the "Hooded Householder" — who must remain anonymous for obvious reasons — followed the advice on the outside of the tape and immediately posted it through a neighbour's letterbox. The disposal ploy backfired badly, however, when the Hooded Householder then returned home and found "three further anonymous videos on the floor underneath my letter box".

In desperation, a Mr S.H. from Berkhamsted sent his unwanted tape to *Private Eye*. Anyone else trying the same silly trick will invoke the severe Wrath of Gnome. You have been warned...

HACKWATCH

JANE MOORE

WHEN Jean Rook died a few years ago, some old Fleet Street hands feared that the era of Glenda Slagg had ended. Readers, they predicted gloomily, would no longer tolerate witless hackettes who filled their columns with formulaic bitchery.

Not so. There are now more Glendas than ever — and the biggest Slagg of them all is Jane Moore, woman's editor of the *Sun*. "She Takes No Prisoners" is the strange boast above her weekly page. Why would she need any? She does all the slopping-out herself...

3 December: On a shopping expedition to Harvey Nicks, Jane espies film star and namesake Demi Moore. "With her crew cut hair, baggy khaki boilersuit, clumpy boots and staid specs, she looked like a throwback to the Greenham Common days. But she still looked petite, classy and drop-dead gorgeous. How I hate her." Returning home, she finds her "other half" watching the rugby on TV. "Great tackle!" he bellows as Phil de Glanville dives into view. *"And," Jane adds saucily, "from where I was sitting, a great bum too."* By way of variety, she prints a photo of Jonathan Ross's well-endowed wife, who "is in a wheelchair after bending over and slipping a disc. I'm not surprised. Boobs that impressive would put a strain on even the strongest of lower backs." Charming.

17 December: Jane ventures an opinion on Leigh Ingram, the "lazy little sod" who has avoided school for the past 18 months. His parents should withdraw all his privileges "until he got his big lazy butt to school". If that fails, his dad should deliver "a swift and hefty kick up Leigh's idle backside".

24 December: Still taking no prisoners, Jane gives her verdict on the boy who murdered Philip Lawrence and the youth who stabbed the husband of the DPP: they are "scum".

31 December: Jane offers "a big thanks to all of you who've written to me over the past year... To those of you who wrote in anonymously, I will say only one thing. At least I have the courage to put my name to what I write." Then, most courageously, she treats us to her new year prediction: heart-throb American actor George Clooney "moves to Britain and falls in love with me (well, a girl can dream, can't she?)" Finally, she chastises footballer Dean Holdsworth for having an affair with Linsey Dawn Mackenzie — "a girl with breasts like a photo finish in a barrage balloon race". Do we detect a slight boob fixation here?

14 January 1997: "If I hear one more man tut tut about how terrible Sita White is for filing a paternity suit against Imran Khan, I won't be responsible for my actions," Jane rages. "Why the hell should Sita shut up and let him shirk all responsibility?" Who are these men who tut-tut about Sita White? Perhaps a small clue can be found in another item, where Jane reveals that she and her "other half" have had a "blazing row".

21 January: Maureen and David Eagle, whoever they may be, are about to have their seventh child. "Saints bloody preserve us," Jane fumes. "When couples like the Eagles haphazardly breed because they 'just like having children', it is blatantly irresponsible." Having sorted that out, she takes a fearless swipe at those ever-popular members of the royal family, Fergie and Prince Edward: "Both of these talentless individuals would have zilch earning power if they were not connected to such a powerful British institution... They must be stopped now."

28 January: "She has already cost the royal family dearly and now she's set for a relaunch. No, not the royal yacht Britannia. I'm talking about Camilla Parker-Bowles." Stoopid! "I have blasted Charles and Camilla several times in the past," Jane reminds us, as if her opinions were eagerly awaited at the palace every Tuesday. "But now we are 15 years down the line, maybe it is time to forgive and forget... I suddenly find myself with a grudging admiration for the woman." To show that she isn't going soft, Jane then attacks Fergie for having a big bottom and Hugh Grant for being a lousy actor.

4 February: With startling originality, Jane attacks the Duchess of York for her appalling dress sense: "It is rumoured Fergie may follow Diana's example and flog off a few frocks. So if your granny's loo roll holder needs replacing, take note." Hilarious!

11 February: "The fresh-faced redhead we heralded as a breath of fresh air to the stuffy royals has proved to be a dangerous windbag who is systematically destroying them." Fergie — aren'tcha sick of her? She is "tacky" and "trivial", a "laughing stock" who has "a backside that needs planning permission".

25 February: Samantha Janus, who boasts that she is fantastic in bed, has been dumped by her lover. "You're obviously not as good as you think, Sam," Jane sneers. She then turns to Patsy Kensit, who has claimed to be suffering from exhaustion. "I suspect Patsy's 'exhaustion' stems from being too far up her own self-indulgent backside." But what of Jane's own love-life? Revealing that she and her four-year-old daughter have just spent a week in Tenerife, she notes that "one advantage of being a single parent on holiday is that you don't get pestered by timeshare salesmen, who assume you can't make decisions without a man by your side." Single parent? Whatever happened to the "other half" about whom we've heard so much?

4 March: Jane tries her hand at humour. "Model Sharleen Moore says chart star Peter Andre made love to her all night, then quoted extracts from the Bible... They parted in January but Sharleen says she wants him back. It could be known as the Resurr-erection." Once the laughter has subsided, she tries again: "Scientists have already proved they can clone a sheep, and now they've achieved it with monkeys. Bringing the chance of cloning human beings that much closer. One George Clooney for me, please." Geddit?

11 March: We know that Jane disapproves of women with big breasts, as befits a columnist in the *Sun*. So can we assume that she admires Will Carling's small-chested girlfriend, Ali Cockayne? Er, no. Observing that Ali once wanted to be a catwalk model, Jane adds: "Her former boyfriend Cliff Van Helm says he got her 'lingerie and swimwear work', but nothing came of it. Perhaps business was like Ali herself. Flat." While in this benign mood, she also denounces Camilla Parker-Bowles as an "old boot". Can this possibly be the same Camilla whom she promised to "forgive and forget"?

18 March: Jane savages Michael Barrymore for returning to his wife, Cheryl. "In truth," she informs us, "Barrymore went back to his marriage for one reason alone. He is in love with himself. He thrives on being the centre of attention... His ego won't allow him to step out of the limelight." Unlike the oh-so-bashful Jane Moore...

1 April: Jane attacks another major figure: "self-obsessed" four times married comic Jim Davidson. Jane has worked out that Jim treats women as "sequels not equals" and notes how he has taken up with Page Three girl Deborah Corrigan, who though only 24 "has already had a boob job, nose job, eyelid tuck and liposuction on her thighs". If she wants to become the fifth Mrs Davidson and stay that way she'd do best to remain childless "because they *can't* be surgically removed", advises the thoughtful Moore.

"Kids these days — they don't know they're born!"

DOING THE ROUNDS

QUARRY HOUSE, the Leeds HQ of the NHS executive, is not the place to work if you're into job security: 200 jobs — a fifth of the workforce — have already been cut and a further reduction of 1-in-10 of all NHSE posts is planned to cut costs from £55.3m to £48m.

One definite victim is Mrs Bottomley's intelligence (sic) unit, set up in 1993 to put a gloss on NHS horror stories and promote good news. The fact that ministers no longer need early warnings of patients dying on waiting lists is not a reflection of the success of the government's health reforms, but rather the abject failure of the Labour party to expose rationing of health care for fear of being forced into spending commitments.

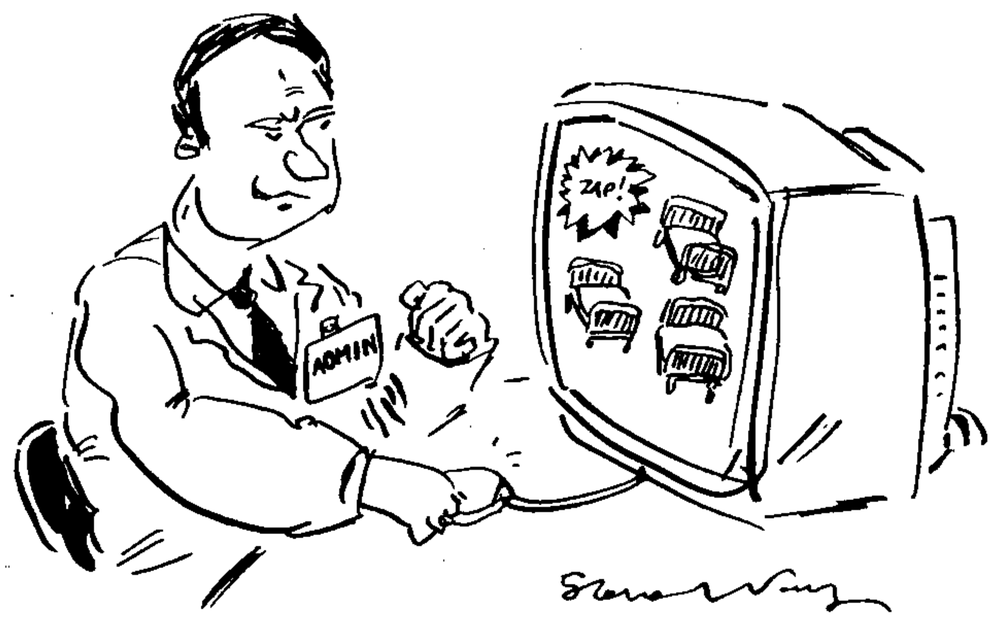
Meanwhile, health authorities and GP fundholders across the country ran out of money last November, with routine operations postponed until the start of the next financial year. Patients have died in waiting because of a lack of staffed intensive care beds.

This should have been a godsend for Labour's Chris Smith, and yet he has remained suspiciously quiet. As John Maples, the deputy chairman of the Conservative party said in 1993: "The best the Tories can hope for is zero media coverage of the health service." Mr Smith seems only too keen to oblige.

● WHO took the brilliant decision, in flagrant breach of previous promises, to close down a quarter of **Barts hospital** and the whole of the **Queen Elizabeth Children's hospital** before their privately financed replacements are even off the drawing board?

Step forward Sir Derek Boorman, chairman of the **Royal Hospitals Trust** and former major-general of the Brigade of Gurkhas. Sir Derek is terribly pleased with his newly-appointed chief executive, Ray Pett, who, according to a trust newsletter, "has extensive high-level national and international experience in the public sector".

Rather churlishly, it doesn't give any details of that experience. In fact Ray had a long career in military service, part of it as commander of the 48th Gurkha Infantry Brigade. Thus the two most powerful men overseeing the closure of Britain's most famous hospital are former Gurkha officers whose previous experience of the public sector was mainly in killing, or planning to kill. Nice touch.



● "IF YOU were a young GP who wanted to work in a deprived area, you wouldn't choose a surgery converted from a shop with a broom cupboard for the nurses, no room for management staff and poor facilities for the doctor."

So said Dr Tony Calland on the difficulties of recruiting GPs to the **South Wales valleys** of **Rhondda, Cynon, Taff** and **Merthyr Tydfil**, where 95 of the 173 doctors are aged over 50 and nine partnership vacancies are unfilled. Dr Hefin Jones is equally gloomy: "GPs are an endangered species here. More retire early due to increased workload and bad working conditions, and there is a huge shortage of trainees. Some areas will soon be undoctored."

● MANAGERS at **North and Mid-Hampshire health authority** have finally been called to account for the brisk closure of a long-stay ward at **Park Prewett hospital, Basingstoke,** three years ago. A select committee found that the then **Winchester health authority** displayed "blatant disregard" for government guidance by holding a closed meeting on the discharge policy. Three patients died within 22 days of discharge, and the committee has called for the sacking of chair Angela Sealey, chief executive Kate Barnard and community care director Simon Williams.

● **HEALTH Care International**, the government backed Scottish private hospital that collapsed three years ago at a cost of £8.4m to the taxpayer (*Eyes passim*) is trying to sell its services to the NHS again. Built originally to treat 5,000 private patients a year from southern Europe and the Middle East, it collapsed five months after opening having attracted only a handful of punters. Now owned by an Abu Dhabi-based company, HCI wants to attract £100m of private finance initiative money in a bid to become part of **West Glasgow hospitals university trust**. At present, only 10 percent of HCI's 520 beds are occupied and two floors remain unopened.

● LAST month **Tooting** gynaecologist Olav Istre failed to appear for his NHS operating session, preferring to stay with his patients at **Wimbledon's Parkside private hospital**. His senior registrar struggled manfully with the task, but six NHS patients were left to rebook their operations at a later date. As a **St George's** spokesman put it: "This is completely unacceptable... Mr Istre has only been in the country for a few months and did not realise the implication of his action." So why has he been registered so swiftly by the General Medical Council?

PS: **Thames Valley University** is *not* raising rents for student nurses by 33 percent as stated here last week. The increase was proposed by the NHS trust, but the university has blocked it.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) who, according to one disillusioned civil servant writing in the MAFF staff bulletin, "never seem to do anything", are not having a good time.

Last week an MHS veterinary inspector took it upon himself to give practical lessons to slaughtermen in a Humberside abattoir on the correct use of a stunning pistol. Leading the slaughtermen across a yard to the slaughterhall, brandishing the pistol, the vet managed to catch the trigger of the loaded weapon and shoot himself in the leg.

Less than impressed with the skills of this MHS veteran, it is reported that the slaughtermen — some of whom had 30 years' experience of slaughtering animals — were so overcome by mirth the poor vet nearly bled to death before an ambulance was called.

WHATEVER else they might be doing, it is increasingly clear MHS staff are not tackling problems in the slaughtering trade.

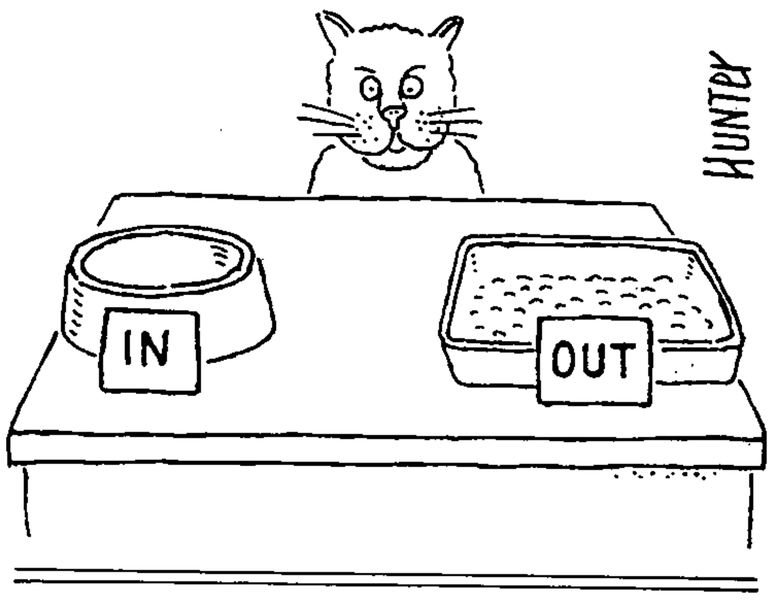
Only last month one of the biggest slaughterhouses in Scotland, Perth Fresh Meats, was closed after major hygiene defects had been found. The faults were not found by MHS officials, who are on the site full-time, but by visiting hygiene inspectors from a supermarket chain supplied by the meat firm.

Elsewhere, at the plant of E.E. Pilgrim in Norwich, it took a Channel 4 documentary to reveal such barbaric pig slaughtering practices — carried on under the noses of the MHS — that farmers who supply the plant are organising a boycott of the unit while meat wholesalers are refusing to trade with the firm.

Meanwhile, for its contribution to the debate on meat standards the BBC chose to feature a Bristol slaughterhouse, Jarratts & Son, as an example of a "clean" slaughterhouse. After intoning on *The 9 o'clock News* that the larger units had got their act together, while there were "still problems" with some smaller slaughterhouses, the programme allowed its owner to proclaim his standards while arguing that the "cowboys" should be rooted out.

It may be just a small point, but is this the same Jarratts which lost its vet Marie Govi, who resigned rather than sign blank BSE forms for export meat? And is it the same Jarratts which supplied meat to a certain fast-food chain which caused the first meat-associated E coli outbreak in the UK? Surely not.

'New Muckspreader'



NUCLEAR NEWS

THE almost-unthinkable has happened: the nuclear industry, having lost a government inquiry for the first time, has been refused permission to build a nuclear waste dump at Sellafield, even though it was disguised as an experimental laboratory.

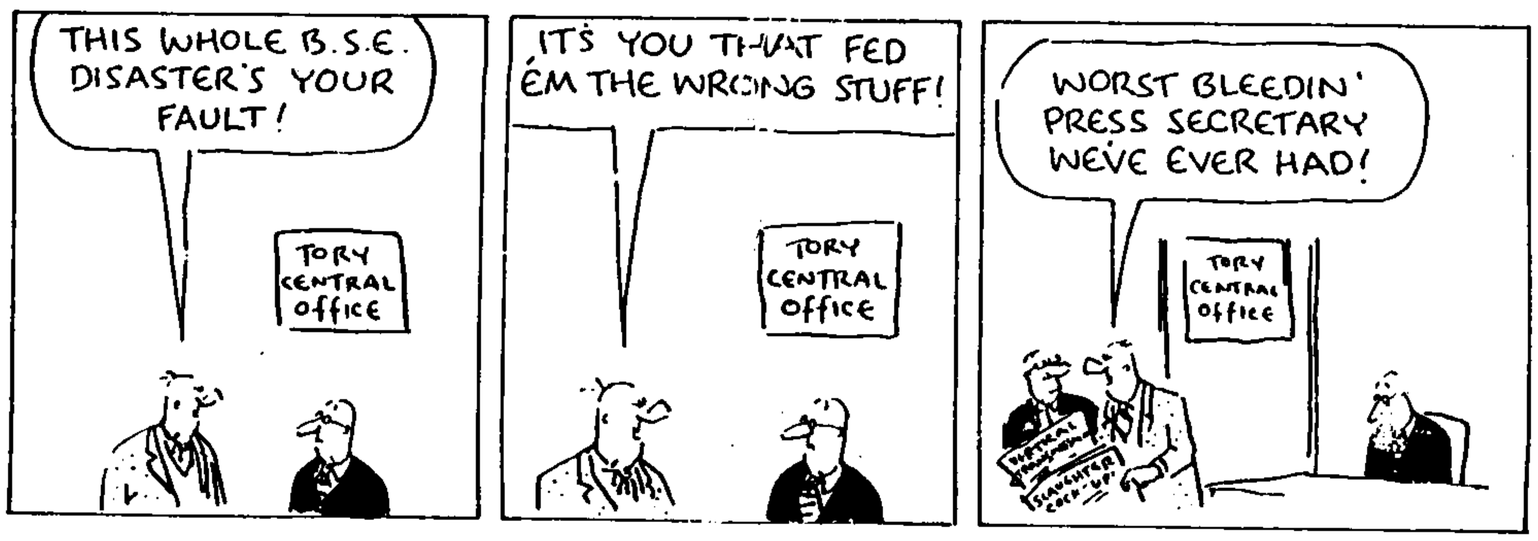
It was a victory of science over opportunism, and the consequences are incalculable. If the industry cannot dispose of nuclear waste, it is hard to see how it can carry on producing it for much longer, which it has to if it wants to generate electricity.

The announcement was made by environment secretary John Gummer on the very day John Major called the election — blatant news management as the dump inquiry ended in February 1996, the inspector's report arrived last November and Gummer had sat on it ever since.

But there is a serious side to the election black comedy: a mound of nuclear waste the size of a block of flats waiting to be disposed of and no idea what to do with it. It will continue to grow so long as power stations produce it. It is stacking up in, among other places, Gummer's Suffolk Coastal constituency, which has a pressurised water reactor at Sizewell.

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


THIS WHOLE B.S.E. DISASTER'S YOUR FAULT!
TORY CENTRAL OFFICE
IT'S YOU THAT FED 'EM THE WRONG STUFF!
TORY CENTRAL OFFICE
WORST BLEEDIN' PRESS SECRETARY WE'VE EVER HAD!
TORY CENTRAL OFFICE

THE
Rotten Borough Advertiser
Friday, 4th April 1997

NEW LABOUR, NEW HEARTLESSNESS

WHILE "new" Labour hailed the Wirral South by-election as a great victory for "commonsense and compassion", Labour-controlled Wirral metropolitan council was refusing to give even a penny of assistance to a deaf and lame woman and her two children who were destitute, with no money at all.

Elizabeth Murphy returned home to the Wirral from Italy on Christmas Eve. She told her mother that her 14-year marriage to her Italian husband was over. She could not stand another day of his physical and sexual abuse against her and her children. She is deaf and lame with metal pins in her legs.

Her mother Ann Murphy depends entirely on a state pension which cannot possibly sustain her daughter and two grandchildren. Elizabeth applied for income support but was turned down because she was not "habitually resident" in the UK. Her solicitor, Stephen Harnden, applied to the council for help under the national assistance act, or the chronically sick and disabled persons act, or the community care act. Elizabeth was seen by council officials on 21 February and told there would be no help for her. On 26 February Mr Ken Corker, a Wirral social work team manager, repeated that there would be no money for mother or children because of "budgetary restraints".

Starvation loomed. The solicitors applied at once for leave judicially to review the council's "perverse" behaviour. Leave was granted by Mr Justice Kay, who ordered the council to provide interim support "to enable the applicant to feed and clothe herself and her children". Nothing happened so the solicitors applied for an injunction to enforce the order. Suddenly the "new" Labour council found it could fork out £100 a week.

IN BRIEF

ST ALBANS: When the council gave its bins contract to MRS, the company sacked staff and reemployed two-thirds of them on less money. While some lost 20 years' pensionable service and are suing the council, MRS is paying a flash QC to defend its record... Step forward Cherie Booth QC, aka Mrs Tony Blair.

WEST YORKS: "New" Labour councillors who are the *majority* on the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive have voted to scrap free bus passes for blind people.

WALTHAM FOREST: Dumped by Wandsworth, and following a deluge of complaints about shoddy work, Serviceteam has had its five-year, £20m contract to collect rubbish and clean the streets of Waltham Forest terminated. Due to run until July 1999, it will end this September — a loss of £7m for Serviceteam.

RENFREWSHIRE: The day before the Labour council discussed budget cuts — in particular to school bus services — council leader Hugh Henry and Coun Jack Green went to the Local Government Quality Awards in a chauffeur-driven Daimler paid for by the ABC Consortium, a firm which buys products in bulk for the council. Green chairs the committee which negotiates with ABC what it needs to buy and what it should be paid.

TV TIMES: Tens of thousands of council tenants in flats with communal TV aerials have been denied the (dubious joy) of tuning in to Channel 5 thanks to sloppy drafting of the C5 contract. The problem is acute in London, where several councils have received six-figure bills to have aerials upgraded to amplify the pathetic C5 signal. Islington has 800 aerials affecting around 12,000 households and the bill for upgrading and adjusting is around £500,000. Many councils have rejigged budgets to placate tenants who've just had council tax bills.

SPEND SPEND SPEND

ISLINGTON council may be the third poorest in the country, but it failed to stop community worker Kathy O'Neill taking parties of pensioners on holiday to Majorca, Jersey and Spain at public expense.

When her bosses eventually became suspicious and threatened to cancel the Jersey bash she wrote a cheque for £17,600 on a playgroup account she knew had been closed and claimed that charities had sent in £30,000 to fund the trips. She then spent £930 of public money on a two-week holiday in Turkey for herself and a friend.

In all O'Neill took the council for £53,000 until she was suspended by embarrassed senior officers. So what is Labour Islington doing about this gross injustice? *Nothing*. It contacted Inspector Knacker but did not make an official complaint after hearing that O'Neill had destroyed much of the documentation.

BY JUPITER!

THE pension fund of former South Glamorgan council did very well — at least for the fund managers at Jupiter Asset Management who look after it.

In the last financial year their fees were more than double the average of fund managers who look after the nest eggs of other Welsh authority pensioners. The South Glamorgan fund rose sharply in value, as did Jupiter's rewards: fees of £1.8m, including performance payments of £998,000.

Newly formed Cardiff county council has now taken over from South Glamorgan, and its director of finance Keith Bray, perhaps aware that such high payments might raise eyebrows among pensioners, told the *South Wales Echo*: "We are looking at the question of performance fees, whether they are appropriate for the fund and whether we could have got that performance without them."

While South Glamorgan council was in existence, it has now been revealed, two council officials made an all-expenses paid trip to Hong Kong and China as guests of Jupiter Asset Management. The two-week beano would have given useful insight into Jupiter's operations for Barry Doughty, vice-chair of the council, and er, Keith Bray, then director of financial services.

CURSE OF GNOME

SAM YEBOAH, ex-Hackney council personnel chief, has made a poor start at his industrial tribunal.

Among various whinges against the council, Yeboah claims he was racially harassed, that housing director Bernard Crofton harassed him by daring to defend himself against accusations of racism made by Yeboah, and, ludicrously, that Crofton used *Private Eye* to attack Yeboah.

When the tribunal chairman heard that Yeboah was engaging lawyers in a libel action against the *Eye* (from whom we have heard nothing for nearly two years), he ruled that if Yeboah is still suing the *Eye* the industrial tribunal hearing cannot proceed as a secondary court hearing could prejudice it.

Thus if Yeboah wants to proceed with his tribunal he must drop his action against the *Eye* — but if he does so it will look like he's admitting we were right to denounce him all along. Not a good time for Hackney's former self-styled "most senior African employee".

RED FACES OF THE WEEK

PLAID CYMRU's election campaign got off to an embarrassing start when party member Dilys Lewis was jailed for two months for falsifying proxy voters' applications at a council election in 1995.

Her creative penmanship was supposed to help her win a seat on Rhondda Cynon Taff borough council, but the 37-year-old mother of two lost to Labour by 200 votes — rather more than the eight she forged.

Meanwhile in Glasgow Labour councillor and mother-of-two Heather Ritchie has been tarnished by allegations that she assaulted Brian McKenna, secretary of a local community council, after "bumping into" him following a stormy council meeting.

McKenna, who was apparently suffering from a mouth ulcer and collapsed in agony and passed out after Ritchie hit him, was taken to hospital. Strathclyde police say they are sending a report to the procurator fiscal, but all eyes are on Labour to see if it lives up to the "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime" slogan.

O·B·N

"Following the very successful visit this morning to the headquarters of the McLaren Formula One team in my constituency, would my Rt Hon Friend agree with me that what counts is not who is ahead at the first corner, but who has the skill, expertise, the stamina and the nerve to see the race right through to the winning post?"

SIR CRANLEY ONSLOW
Commons Report in The Independent

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

YOBS

HUSBAND

Were Jehovas Witnesses We'd like to come in and discuss Sin
Yeah come in, it doesn't bother me
I don't actually live here. Im just robbin' the place

Letters

Lookalike

Blair

Imp

Sir,

On a recent visit to Lincoln Cathedral I was struck by the pronounced resemblance of the Lincoln Imp to the leader of HM Opposition, the Hon. Tony Blair.

On further investigation I discovered that the Imp, an impudent young disciple of the Devil, had climbed on the altar, laughing with derision, and threatened to throw out the Bishop, the Dean, the organist and most of the congregation, before he was stopped by divine intervention. How very different from New Labour.

Yours sincerely,
CHRIS JACKSON,
Lincoln.

Face value

Sir,

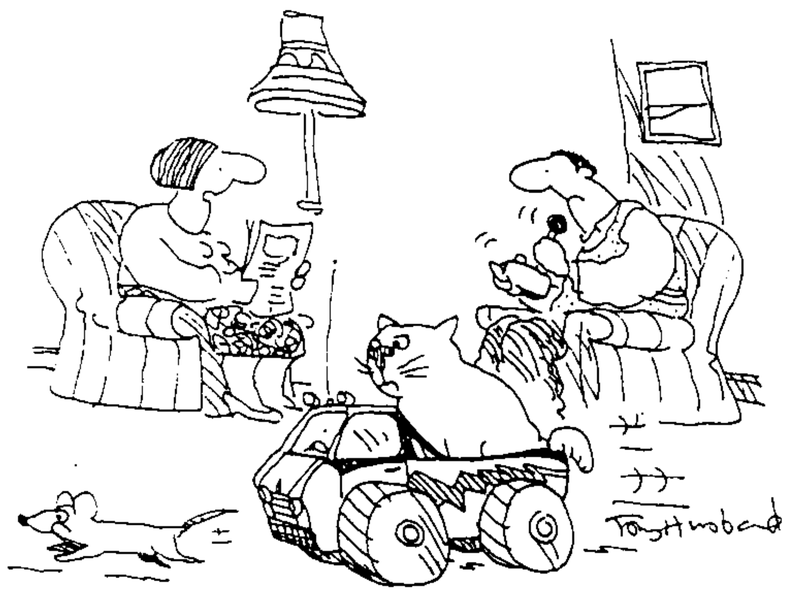
I write in connection with your report Red Faces of the Week (EYE 920). *I had assumed your research was up to date. Unfortunately two facts were missing from your story:*

1. The "internal party report" into the allegation of being "a woman-beater" was actually presented to the Southward Labour Group on Wednesday 12 March and vindicated my position.

2. I denied the allegations at the time they first appeared in November 1996 and last Friday 14 March, now the Wirral South by-election is over, I started proceedings against the MAIL ON SUNDAY.

The allegations have cost me the chance of representing the people of Wirral South in parliament. I want a complete retraction and public apology from the paper. The paper's fabrications have caused my parents, my friends and myself untold distress. I now wish to get on with the rest of my life and political career.

Yours sincerely,
COUN IAN WINGFIELD,
Southward Labour Chief Whip and Newington ward councillor.



"You spoil that cat, Paul"

Hearts content

Sir,

As an ex-resident of Leeds and son of a person operated on by one of the heart specialists detailed in DOING THE ROUNDS, EYE 919, *it seems clear from the statistics cited that there are perhaps more fundamental concerns for heart op patients than whether Mr Walker is ever let loose again. It has to be said that a mortality rate of 14.6 percent would do nothing to reassure me that Mr Walker still has what it takes! The more interesting fact, missed by your correspondent, is the significant rise in mortality rates for all four heart specialists: Mr Saunders from 2.9% to 5.7%; Mr Watterson from 3.9% to 4.4%; Mr Nair from 2.6% to 3.2% and Mr Walker from 7.1% to 14.6%. Such an "across the board" rise in mortality rates must be based on some underlying issues: (a) patients coming thru' in a worse state; (b) a group of surgeons all with declining skills; (c) a group of surgeons working under ever worsening conditions with intensifying pressures; (d) a trust prepared to kick out patients too early following major operations. Call me cynical, but my money's on a combination of (c) and (d)! Perhaps the residents of Leeds should ship out before they reach the point of requiring the services of heart specialists!*

DR LYNDON SIMKIN,
University of Warwick.

All well and good

Sir,

In EYE 918 *you printed a story which claimed that following rowdy behaviour the police were called to a public house (The Millers Well — East Ham) and I was escorted out by "Inspector Knacker" at the manager's request. These are completely false allegations. As a matter of interest, I have never been thrown out of a pub or been escorted by the police anywhere, in my life.*

I have obtained the video of the night in question from the manager of the Millers Well, which confirms that the story you printed about me is false. I also have a statement from the manager that confirms my innocence.

Yours faithfully,
COUN ROBIN WALES,
Leader of Newham Council.

Letter of the law

Sir,

BEAK OF THE WEEK *(21 March) fell below the normal (and necessary) standards of credible (and creditable) reporting — assuming, as I do, that the item was supposed to constitute a criticism of the bench which heard the motoring case involving Viscount Whitelaw.*

To take the critical points seemingly being made seriatim:

1. Whitelaw had a road accident but was not breathalysed. This may be unusual but it was a matter for the police at the time of the accident, not for the magistrates when the case is heard.

2. Whitelaw was fined £75. This would be about right if he had been convicted of eg: failing to observe a stop sign. Clearly it would not be right (normally) as a penalty for eg: dangerous driving. Since we don't know which (if either) was the charge, a rational judgement on the appropriateness of the sentence is impossible; and anyway, the charge to be faced in court is a matter for the CPS, not for the magistrates.

3. Whitelaw, as an elderly driver who had had an accident, was not required to retake a driving test. Why should he? Having an accident is not an offence in itself, nor is it in law a reason for imposing a re-test; again, if his offence was a minor one, the resulting accident would be irrelevant to the sentence and a re-test would not be apposite. Re-tests are comparatively rare, anyway: I have never ordered one in eight years as a magistrate.

Yours faithfully,
MICHAEL BROWN,
Highbridge, Somerset.

Vox populi

Sir,

I wonder why no one has commented (as far as I know) on the remarkable similarity between John Major's voice and the legendary Mr Wisty of Peter Cook fame?

Even the actual words he speaks bear a striking resemblance to Mr Wisty. Notice the way he repeats "Oh no, oh no!" and "I've been thinking a lot lately..." This last statement demonstrates that he also has Mr Wisty's talent for irony.

Yours faithfully,
TONY VINICOMBE,
Hove, East Sussex.

Figuratively speaking

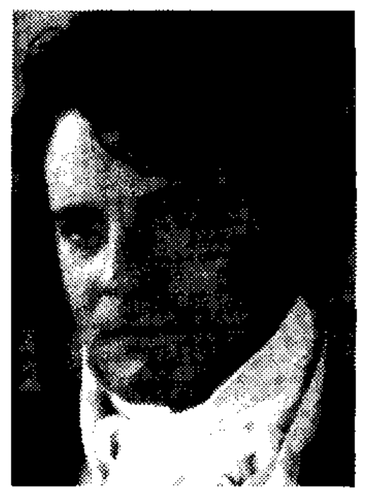
Sir,

If Emma Spice really is "the fat one" (HACKWATCH, EYE 920), *then presumably Jodie Kidd represents a typical woman's build.*

And I thought the EYE, *"supermodels" et al, was engaged in some sort of satire of "thin culture".*

Yours,
MIKE METCALF,
Cambridge.

Non-Lookalike



Hornby

Firth

Sir,

Has anyone else noticed the remarkable lack of similarity between Nick Hornby, author of FEVER PITCH, *and Colin Firth who stars in the film of the book?*

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW NICKOLDS,
Cambridge.

Out of commission

Sir,

As a trustee of the Church of England Pensions Board, I hope you will allow me to correct some of the fiction you published in FOOTNOTES (EYE 914) *about our work.*

The new provisions for clergy pensions are not caused by the commissioners' losses. It is caused by the increased number of retired clergy and significant increases in their pensions. Thirty years ago, vicars did not need to retire at all. The new system simply requires the church to fund a pension scheme in a similar way to most other employers.

The £1.3bn you mention is not being raised by parishes. This figure is the money the commissioners already have, which has been earmarked to pay for pension entitlement already built up.

The commissioners are not a church body guilty of "losing a third of the entire losses of the Church of England". They are not a church body at all, but a parliamentary body with whom the church bodies have disagreed over the pension changes. Their losses represent less than 1 percent of the financial assets of the Church of England.

The new scheme does not hit poorer parishes harder. All parishes are required to pay the same, but poorer parishes receive help from central funds. These funds will be greater by relieving the commissioners of liability for future pensions.

Yours sincerely,
ROBERT LEACH FCCA FIBPM,
Epsom, Surrey.

I-SPY

Keighley, W. Yorkshire

Submitted by T.R. Delaney. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Blaked Potato

Sir,

Couch Potato's hatred of BLAKE'S 7 (EYE 920) *is unjustified. If the show was "unwatchable" and an embarrassing "mistake" for the BBC controller, why did it run for four seasons and attract around 10 million viewers?*

He accuses BLAKE'S 7 *of "timidity" and of treating itself as a joke. Bollocks. Although the series borrows from* STAR TREK *and* STAR WARS, *it is darker and more realistic than either of them. Its mature view of good and evil as a continuum, for example, is unique in television sci-fi. The "good guys" are prone to arrogance, drug abuse and theft, while the "bad guys" are convincingly rendered fascists rather than evil lords or bug-eyed monsters. In keeping with creator Terry Nation's pessimism ("I can only see terror in space"), the show is also uncompromisingly bleak. Blake's struggle for freedom is doomed from the start and — again uniquely — he and most of his crew are killed during the series.*

Couch Potato starts by slagging off British sci-fi for its low production values and then goes on to note that American television sci-fi is crap. This proves that money isn't everything. In 30 years' time people will still be watching DOCTOR WHO *and* BLAKE'S 7, *but* STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION, *with its pretentious, politically correct scripts, plodding pace and swanky special effects, will be completely forgotten.*

Yours sincerely,
GERAINT JOHNSON,
Oxford.

PRIZE WINNING HANDMADE SAUSAGES
Once tasted you'll never want another
Oxhey Lane Farm Shop

Utter balls

Sir,

I couldn't help but notice the striking resemblance between the quote absurdly assigned to the pedestrian, witless John Motson on BBC1 (COLEMANBALLS) *viz: "He has those telescopic legs that can turn a Leeds ball into an Arsenal one" which were actually uttered by the exuberant Jonathan Pearce on Capital Gold Radio — and which I sent you the day after.*

I wonder if by any chance they are related — and if you saved yourselves £10 by using a fictitious contributor. I think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
MAURICE BARNES,
Radlett, Herts.

Expletives depleted

My Lord Gnome,

I entirely agree with the sentiment behind Paul Hetherington's "Sworn Oaths" letter in the current EYE. *These bowdlerized articles are making no sense at all.*

*For example, what was Vanessa Phelps [sic] called? I thought I understood "fat ****" to mean "fat cunt" except on the following page "cunt" appears to be censored as "c***". Is it the rule that the "c" is replaced by "*" following "fat" but not after "little"? There's more mystery on page 23 where the erstwhile Peter Carter-Fuck has now been renamed Carter-Ruck. More strangely, despite the expurgating of Paul's letter, the clip from the* JORDAN TIMES *on page 21 is allowed to contain the word "fuck" (or was the joke that the* JORDAN TIMES *had printed "Fonald F*ck"?)*

Please can we either have an explanation of what these asterisks represent or, more sensibly, a return to recent pre-Puritan times when we could actually understand what you meant?

Regards,
JOHN CARR.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The FA are still optimistic about England's bid to stage the World Cup in twenty thousand and six."
PETER SNOW, BBC2
(B. Williams)

"That's just the tip of the ice-cube."
NEIL HAMILTON, BBC2
(B. Graham)

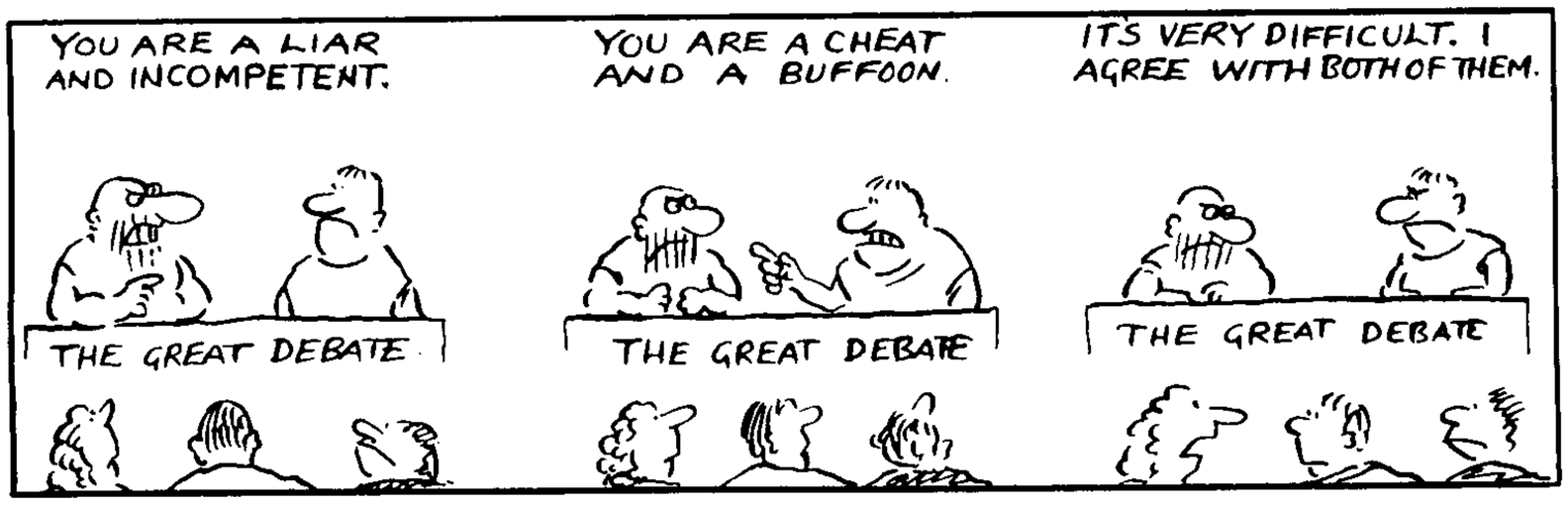
"Liverpool will be without Kvarme tonight, he's illegible."
JIMMY ARMFIELD, Radio 5 Live
(Matt Hartridge)

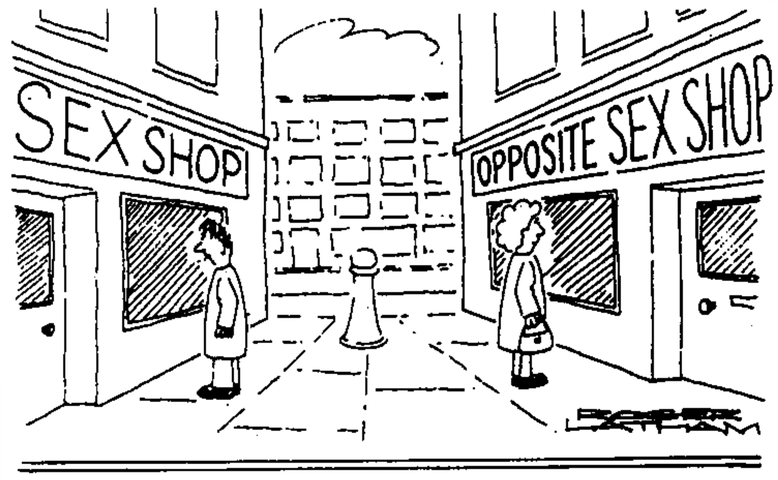
"I think in international football you have to be able to handle the ball."
GLENN HODDLE, Radio 5
(Julian Thake)

Tim Lovejoy *(presenter): ...what football team do you support?*
Caller: *Woking.*
Tim Lovejoy: *Where do they play?*
Caller: *Woking.*
Sky Sports
(D. Speak)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN


YOU ARE A LIAR AND INCOMPETENT.
THE GREAT DEBATE
YOU ARE A CHEAT AND A BUFFOON.
THE GREAT DEBATE
IT'S VERY DIFFICULT. I AGREE WITH BOTH OF THEM.
THE GREAT DEBATE



SIGNAL FAILURES

WHEN John Bowis, junior transport minister, received a complaint from a constituent about South West Train's redundancy programme (it left trains without drivers and passengers without services), the MP was conciliatory.

"You are, of course, right that South West Trains has made errors in its staffing recently which has resulted in some of the services they have put on in addition to the pre-privatisation services being cancelled for a short period," he wrote.

Whoops! South West Trains' current winter timetable was inherited from British Rail. There are no services "in addition to the pre-privatisation services", so the idea that only new post-privatisation services have been cancelled is totally false.

Indeed, privatisation has generated so few new services or projects government spokesmen have become adept at passing off old for new. In February transport secretary Sir George Young told the press how much he had enjoyed the free coffee on Great North Eastern Railway trains. InterCity Great Western began giving out free coffee in 1993 and InterCity East Coast followed a year or so *before* it was privatised under the GNER banner. Then John Watts boasted of reduced fares on the private Chiltern route from London to Birmingham — reductions introduced by BR in 1993.

Even more cheekily the government and Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (Opraf) are portraying as benefits a number of projects which were *delayed* by privatisation. West Yorkshire and Strathclyde will get new trains now the local railways have been privatised — but those trains would have been running now had privatisation not intervened. The vital West Coast modernisation, trumpeted as a flagship of the private railway, was first announced in *1990* as a scheme for 155mph trains and was given the go-ahead in the chancellor's *1993* budget speech. The much-hyped project will now probably allow a maximum speed of 125mph — common in Britain since the mid-1970s!

LIB DEM MP Chris Davies was furious to receive a letter urging him to support the building of new roads — in particular a new motorway around Birmingham and a dual carriageway across the Peak District national park. The letter was from Chris Leah, chair of the CBI's North West Infrastructure Working Group. What Railtrack makes of the call for new roads is anybody's guess, but no doubt Mr Leah took advice from Railtrack North West, chaired by, er, himself.

PRIVATISATION has wrecked the rover ticket system which once encouraged thousands of tourists to use trains instead of cars.

The rover covering all lines in Britain is no longer publicised in the UK because individual train companies can't agree how to share the marketing budget. Rovers covering individual regions are publicised but the operators are so parochial they market the tickets only in the locality covered by each one — where tickets will be least interesting to the general public.

BR ticket clerks had a single book containing all prices of all rovers — but now there is no such book and full prices may be charged for journeys which would be cheaper by rover.

Bizarrely, an all-lines rover ticket is marketed to foreigners while British people are not told about its domestic counterpart. Brits pay £410 for 14 days' travel while overseas visitors pay much less. There are fears that the deliberate non-marketing of the ticket will be followed by its non-sale in Britain.

'Dr B. Ching'

FUNNY OLD WORLD

Penile Injuries from Vacuum Cleaners

"Case 1 — a 60-year-old man said that he was changing the plug of a Hoover Dustette in the nude while his wife was out shopping, and 'it turned itself on' and caught his penis, causing tearing around the meatus and deeply lacerating the side of the glans. The external meatus was reconstructed and the multiple lacerations of the glans repaired with catgut.

"Case 2 — a 65-year-old railway signalman was in his signal box when he bent down to pick up his tools, slipped on some oil, and 'caught his penis in a Hoover Dustette which happened to be switched on'. He suffered extensive lacerations to the glans, which were repaired with catgut with a good result.

"Case 3 — a 49-year-old man was vacuuming his friend's staircase in a loose-fitting dressing gown, when, intending to switch the machine off, he leaned across to reach the plug: 'at that moment his dressing gown became undone and his penis was sucked into the vacuum cleaner.' Because he had a phimosis he suffered multiple lacerations to the foreskin as well as lacerations to the distal part of the shaft of the penis, including the external meatus. His wounds were repaired with catgut and the phimosis reduced with a dorsal slit." *(British Medical Journal. Spotter: David Nicholls)*

— o —

o "There are a lot of angry people out there," Larry Summerville told listeners to the Auckland radio station More FM 91.8, "and the contest seems to be getting a bit out of hand. Maybe we made a mistake in running it, but I still don't think it was a dumb idea."

Summerville, the station manager, was speaking after New Zealand police threatened to prosecute More FM 91.8 for broadcasting its Toot for Loot competition. "The idea of the competition was simple - we encouraged motorists to cause traffic jams and hold-ups in return for prize money. Contestants kept in touch with the station by mobile phone, and they scored $10 for a horn toot from an angry motorist, and $20 if they managed to goad other drivers into verbal abuse. A full physical assault meant they scooped the $100 jackpot.

"The funny thing is that we actually recorded the competition three weeks ago, but motorists thought it was going out live. And

they were blaming the station for every hold-up in the city, and attacking any driver they thought might be taking part in the competition." *(The Press [Christchurch], 21/2/97. Spotter: Catherine Robinson)*

— o —

o *"Yes, we have suspended the teacher for three months," Tokyo school board official Tomio Shimazaki admitted to reporters. "He had his reasons, but we wish to make it clear that ordering pupils to commit hara-kiri is simply no longer acceptable in Japanese schools."*

Shimazaki freely accepted that the unnamed teacher, 28, had overstepped the mark. "He was angry because two junior high school students had brought candy along on a school camping trip and did not offer to share. To punish them, he placed two hunting knives in front of them and told them to disembowel themselves, saying that ritual suicide was the only honourable course they could take. They both refused, whereupon he repeatedly struck them both with a tent pole, and had to be restrained by colleagues when he began to fashion a noose from a guy rope.

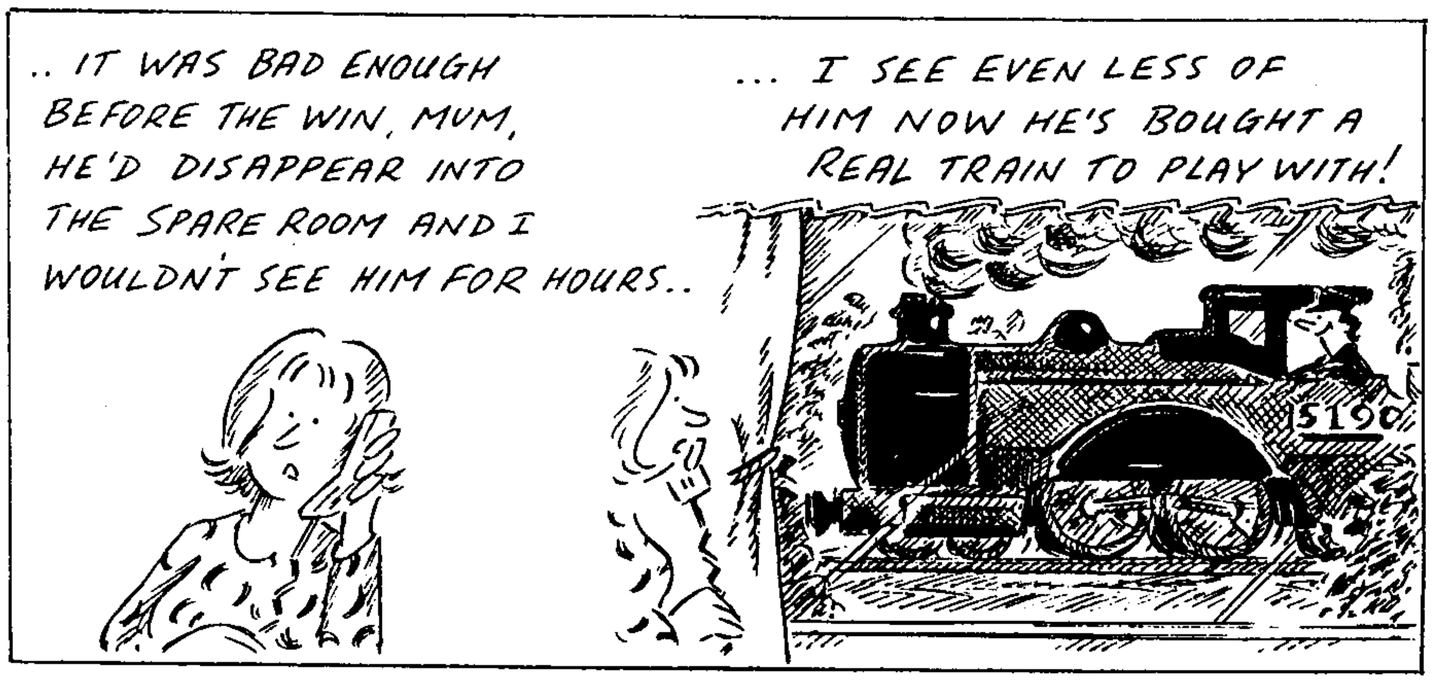
"In his defence, he said he was annoyed with them." (UPI, 21/2/97 Spotter: Robert Smithson)

COMPILED BY

Victor Lewis-Smith

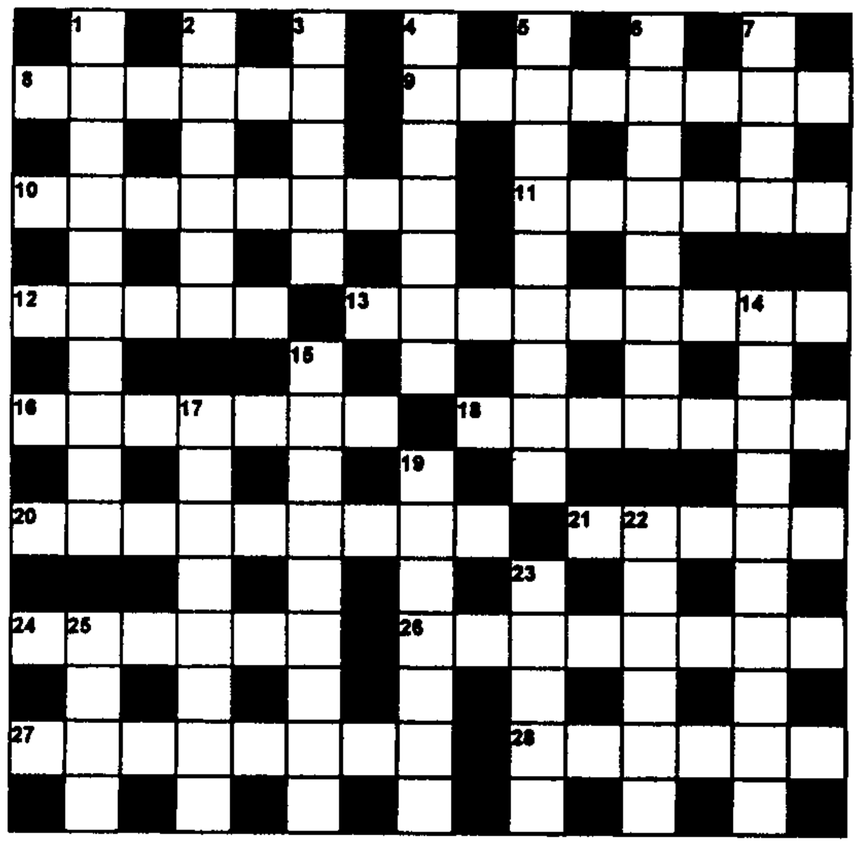
The Lottery Winners

TURNER


.. IT WAS BAD ENOUGH BEFORE THE WIN, MUM, HE'D DISAPPEAR INTO THE SPARE ROOM AND I WOULDN'T SEE HIM FOR HOURS..
... I SEE EVEN LESS OF HIM NOW HE'S BOUGHT A REAL TRAIN TO PLAY WITH!
5190

EYE CROSSWORD 76

by Cyclops *£100 prize*



ACROSS

8 "Short skirt half concealed by belly on Grade" shock (6)
9 Bristol development media nails PMT issue (8)
10 They reveal Major's behind in unusual hot spell (3,5)
11 Cap'n Bob's missing breakfast? (6)
12/24/6 Blue gags and offensive series of deliberate political smears and the like (5,6,8)
13 Programme dishing up the latest on topless female Tory MP (9)
16 Gas and water to some means swanky home abroad (7)
18 PM briefly wants no input into corporal punishment (7)
20 Stalemate election — naff ITV pollster left right away (5,4)
21 Atmosphere black and blue around broadcaster (5)
24 (see 12)
26 It's Brenda's place to back Blair's lot — honest! (8)
27 Rashly alleges taking 'E' has little significance for the lay man (8)
28 Minister of fun at centre of EC fiasco (6)

DOWN

1 Main store allows in sexually vacillating clergyman! (10)
2 Utter mush, the thing you get from the soap-box (6)
3 Parties? Load of bollocks! (5)
4 Racecourse regular getting almost pissed on Tuesday with Brenda (7)
5 Non-PC representative from South shafts bloke (9)
6 (see 12)
7 Busty Eve's not entirely painful on the eye! (4)
14 Illicit sex requires material for a blow job, an item of Le Creuset and opener with no point (5-5)
15 Would-be MP produces camp material — House briefly rises (9)
17 It's backside is slit, providing dog fur (8)
19 Hacks provided for here with model smothered in furs (7)
22 Catchphrase to promote a political party? No, slag off, more likely! (6)
23 *Scum*, the main film? (5)
25 Philip, for example, blows top and causes stink! (4)

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 11.04.97. Entries to "Crossword", Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 75

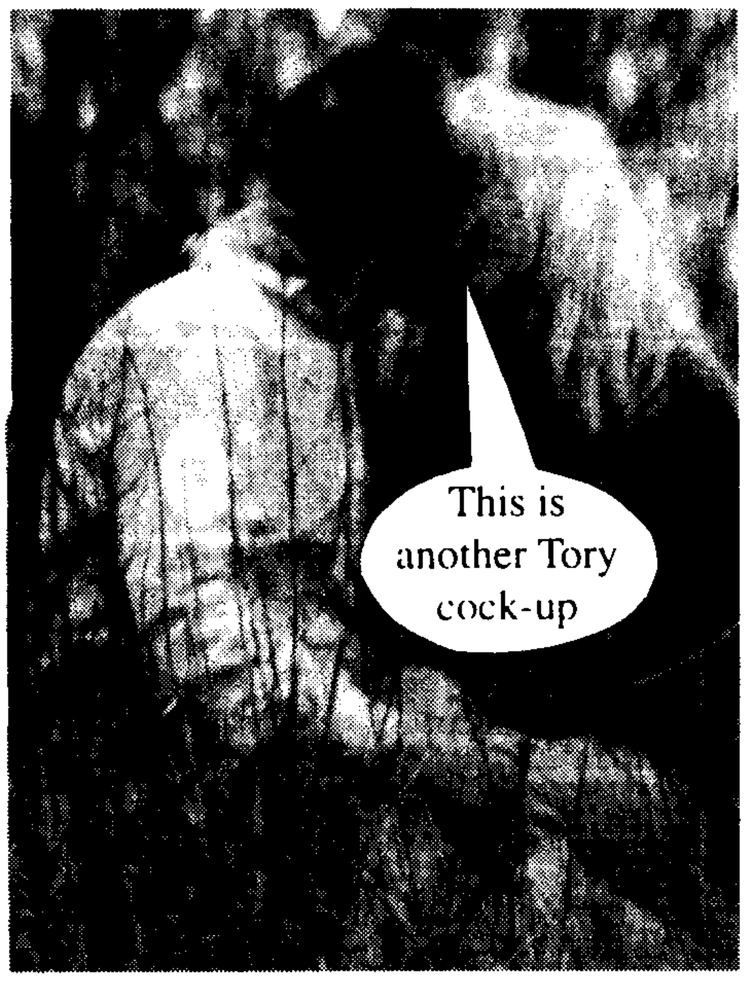
Winner: JOHN GAMMON

ACROSS: 8 Hong Kong 9 Smalls 10 Sushi 11 Yeomanry 12 Opting Out 14 (See 27) 16 Stuck-Up 18 Viceroy 20 March 21 In The City 24 Portillo 25 Washer 27/14 Damien Hirst 28 (See 6).

DOWN: 1 Yobs 2 Agassi 3 Coming Out 4 Ugly Mug 5 Ascot 6/28 Paradise Syndrome 7 Clare Short 13 Pythagoras 15 Right Wing 17 Cocktail 19 Endorse 22 Castro 23 Blunt 26 Emma.

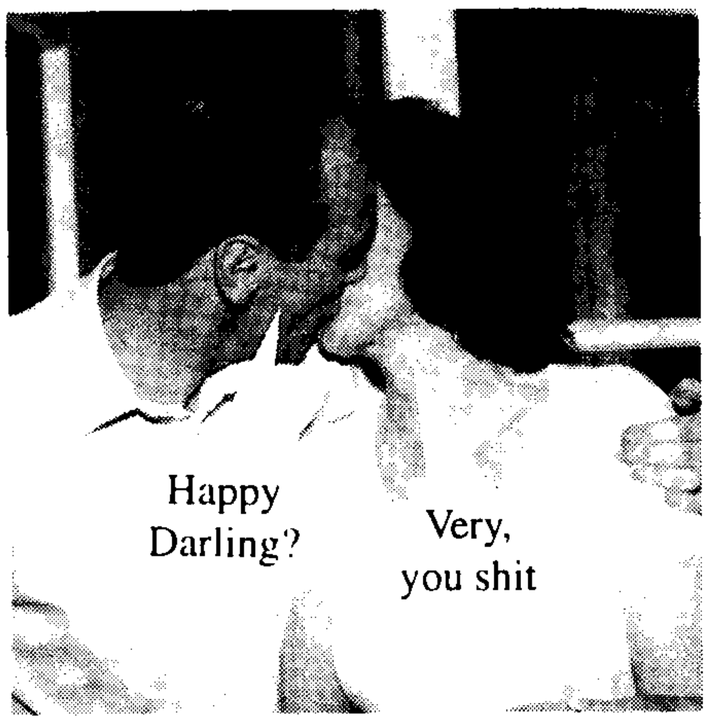
GENERAL ERECTION SPECIAL

BIT ON THE OUTSIDE

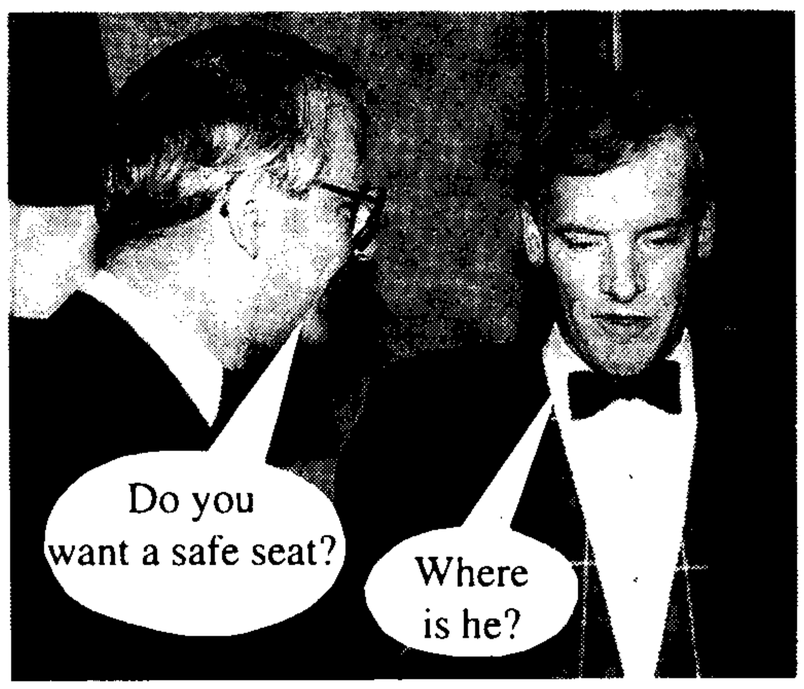


CONSERVATIVE BALLS

MP KISSES WIFE SHOCK



MORE TORY BALLS



(You've done this one. Ed.)

A TaxiDriver writes

Every week a well known Royal Racing trainer is asked to comment on an issue of topical importace.

This week: **Lord Carnarvon** (Cab No. 17321) on the merits of the Environmental protestor Daniel Hooper aka "Swampy".

See that bastrd Swampy up to his old tricks again guv? Bloody swine. Do you realise how much money these chaps have cost us? Millions! You know what I'd do with Swampy and his tunnelling chums? Eh what Guv? Put the ferres in! Then send in the hounds! Then gas them out. That'll put an end to it all! Ha ha ha ha! They say tha badgers are a dirty lot but this shower... really.

I was privileged to have Her Majesty the Queen in the back of my cab once. A proper Lady, Governor, and no mistake.

NEXT WEEK: Janet Daley (Cab 737116) on how Mr Tony Blair will steal all your money, stop your pension and throw you out on the street to die.

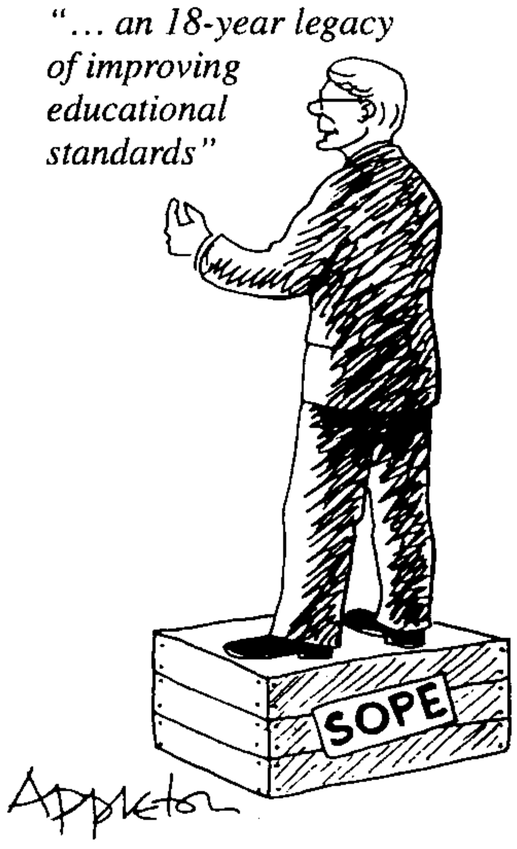
BLAIR CALLS FOR END TO FOCUS ON SLEAZE

by Our Election Staff **Phil Space**

LAST night Mr Tony Blair called for a return to "proper political debate about the real issues that ordinary people are concerned about".

"Let us," he said, "forget once and for all the bribes taken by Mr Hamilton and Mr Smith, the question mark hanging over Mr Merchant after his sex act with a seventeen-year-old prostitute in the park, the homosexual liaison of the Chairman of the Scottish Conservative Party. Let us not dig up old stories about the adulterous Mr Mellor, the 3-in-a-bed Mr Spring or 2-in-a-bed gay love-romp of Mr Ashby in a sleazy French Hotel. No, we will not stoop so low as to resurrect Mr Parkinson's sad affair with his researcher or even tell again the disastrous tale of Mr Profumo and Miss Mandy Rice *(continues for several hours)"*

"... an 18-year legacy of improving educational standards"



April Fool Round-Up

The following entirely unbelievable stories appeared in the press earlier this week. No one was fooled.

Daily Mail

"Major Ahead In Polls"

Sun

"Phew! What a Scorcher! 100s Strip Off in Easter Sizzler"

Daily Telegraph

"Public want to debate issues not sleaze"

Independent

"Independent sales soar"

Guardian

"Hamilton To Resign"

Express

"Spice Girls Not On Front Page"

MASS SUICIDE OF BIZARRE CULT ROCKS NATION

by Our Political Staff **Harry Kiri and Sandy Ego**

IN THE ealy hours of yesterday moming the City of Westminster woke up to the horrific realit that 324 Tories had committd mass suicide.

All the members of a strange fanatical sectcalling themselves the Conser ative Party were found in identical uniforms of pinstripe suitand blue rosette.

"They were all lying," said a shocked observer. "Lying all over the House of Commons. It was horrible and the stink was unbearable"

Sext Scandal

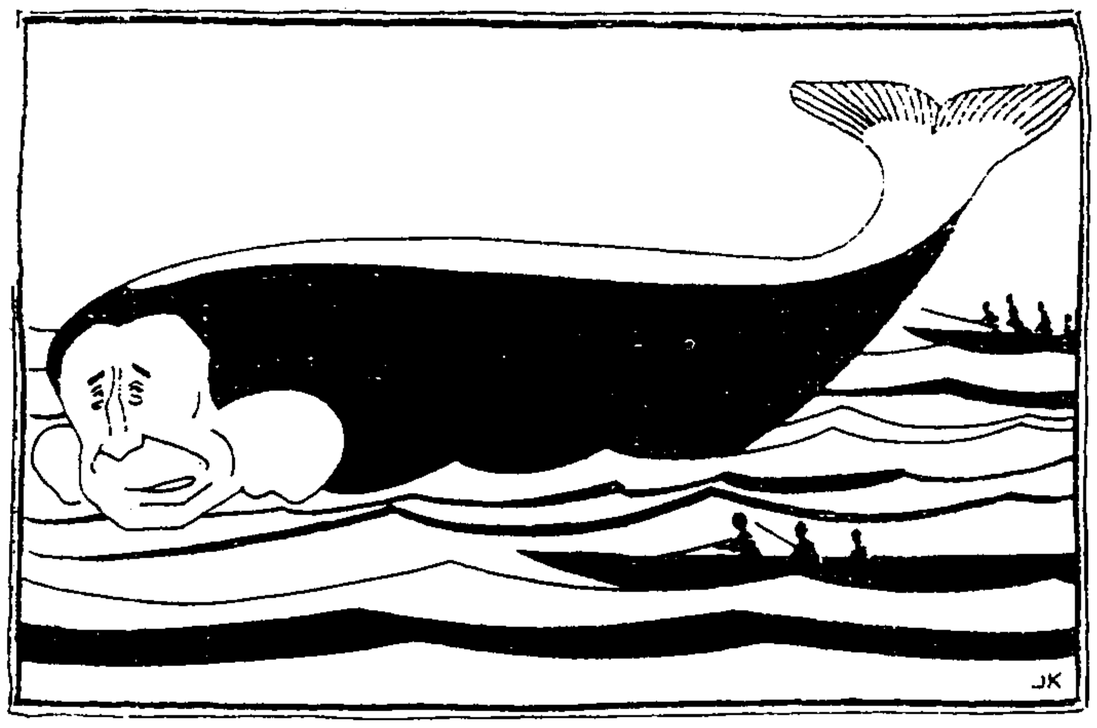
Why tlese men committed political suicide is still unknown but the blame may rest with their leader, a greying 50-year-old who exercised an unhealthy influence over his followers.

Higher HP Source

Said a shocked observer: "It's incredible. They all seemed perfectly respectable men going about their business and then suddenly we discover that they all had a death wish."

The motive for this final act of self-destruction is a mystery. Some experts point to financial greed, others to sexual lust, others to staggering all round incompetence.

"No one could stop them," said one expert. "They were determined to end it all. And they did."



BEACHED WALES STILL STRANDED

by Our Environment staff **Herman Melvin Bragg**

THOUSANDS of people yesterday lined the shore of Highgrove estuary to witness the sad spectacle of Mopy the Wales as it tried desperately to find a way back into public favour.

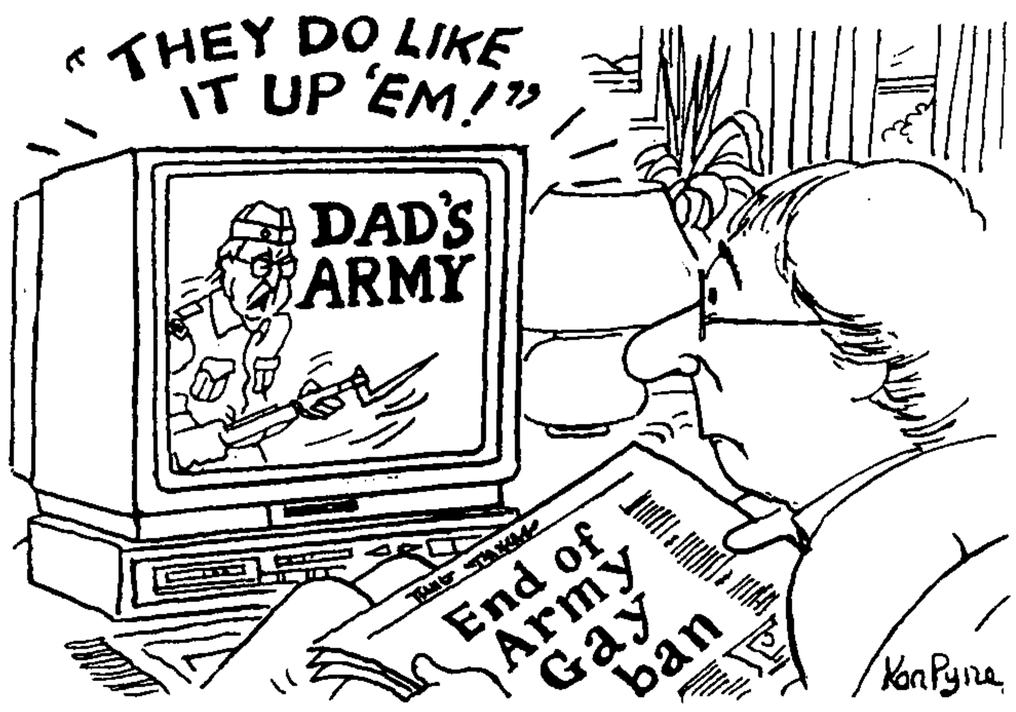
For months a team of experts have been trying to refloat Mopy, when he became grounded after taking a number of wrong turnings on his way to the throne.

Spouting Nonsense

One of those leading the rescue bid, Mr Jonathan Dimbleby said: "We have tried everything — television, books, we have even prayed to Allah — but he remains obstinately stuck in the mud."

Hopes were raised yesterday that Mopy could be coaxed back into the mainstream by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but later Mopy was seen floundering about and lashing out blindly in all directions on the theme of the built environment.

Last night everyone seemed sadly agreed that Mopy the Wales seemed to be washed up forever.



HOT TICKETS

At The Theatre

The Wilmslow Bomb
Revival of Terrorist Irattigan's famous courtroom drama in which no one gets caught and no one is convicted of anything.
Eye Rating: We've seen it all before.

On The Fringe

Merchant of Venus
Modern-dress Shakespearean comedy in which unknown Tory MP is caught trying to get his "pound of flesh" in a Beckenham park.
Eye Rating: Phwooaar!

At The Cinema

The Patient English
Deeply moving, epic drama of patriotic aristocrat Sir David English (Ralph Fiennes) who waits patiently in his Kensington office for a peerage in return for years of loyal devotion to ice-maiden Mrs Thatcher (Kristen Scott-Thomas). Unfortunately he is betrayed when Mr Blair wins the election and his hopes are dashed.
Eye Rating: Z-z-z-z

St Cakes School

Hale-Bopp Term ends today. The following scholarships have been awarded.
The Al-Fayed Democracy Scholarship: E.G.B Fayed (Harrods Preparatory School, Cairo).
The Lloyd Webber Musical Exhibition: J.L.R Lloyd-Webber (Watership Down Preparatory School, Newbury)
The Peter Stringfellow Bursary for Erotic Dance: Tracy Stringfellow (The Soho Academy for Young Ladies, Filth Street).

Masonic

There will be a meeting of the O.C.Lodge (No.666) at the Happy Eater, Junction 7 of the M53, on April 7th. The Grand Muskrat of the Temple (Chief Constable G.B.H Truncheon O.C) will preside, assisted by the Venerable Vizier and Keeper of the Toast (His Honour Justice Stringemup O.C.). Tickets available from the Imperial Trebor Mint (R.J.B Pep-Scheme O.C.), c/o Shirtsleeve and Biro (Chartered Accountants), Internet House, Unit 4, Trading Estate, Barkworth, Herts HGD 2ZZ.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam

So. Farewell
Then. Nearly all
Tory MPs.

"I am not going
To resign."

That is your
Catchphrase.

Then you
Do.

E.J. Thribb, United Kingdom
Independent Anti-EU and
the Salisbury Bypass
Candidate (17½)

ONLY 2 MORE NOT INCONSIDERABLY EARTH-SHATTERING INSTALMENTS TO GO!

Monday

Today the election campaign begins in earnest, and we are focusing on the real issues. These are:

1. How well the economy is doing.
2. How well the economy is doing.
3. You can't trust Mr Blair not to ruin the economy now it is doing so well.

This is what we are going to focus on, *throughout* the campaign, and we will certainly be hearing no more of the so-called sleaze factor. Mr Hamilton and Mr Smith have given me their solemn word that they are not crooks, so there is no need for me to publish the report which says they are.

Tuesday

I am not inconsiderably incandescent with rage. *The Guardian* has printed the report on sleaze, trying to pretend that Mr Hamilton and Mr Smith are crooks. This in my judgement is "total junk", which is a word meaning "rubbish". Luckily Mr Heseltine and Mr Portillo were able to go on *News at One* and reassure everyone that there was not a word of truth in the report, and that Mr Hamilton and Mr Smith were just the type of Tories they supported and were proud to call their colleagues. This will finally draw a line under the so-called sleaze factor which is the Labour Party's only card in this election. Now we can get back to the real issues which I am too busy winning the election to write out again.

Wednesday

Oh dear. I am even more not inconsiderably incandescent with rage than I was yesterday. And I speak as one who is no stranger to incandescence. Mr Smith has resigned on the grounds that unfortunately he is a crook after all. Luckily Mr Heseltine was able to go on *World at One* and reassure everyone that Mr Smith had behaved entirely honourably and done the decent thing in admitting that he

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47¾

was a crook. Who says we are the party of sleaze when we have honourable men like Mr Smith? One thing is sure. This marks the end of the so-called sleaze factor. From now on the public can focus on the issues that really interest them (see above).

Thursday

Oh dear. When it comes to incandescence with rage, I have reached new heights in that respect. One of my MPs, a Mr Merchant, whom I have never met, has been photographed with one of his canvassers, a young lady in a very short skirt who is only 17 and who works in Soho in the sex industry. Obviously we must get our message across to young people, but I am not sure that Mr Merchant is being entirely sensible in allowing himself to be photographed lying on top of Miss Cox in a public place discussing the possibility of achieving the Maastrict convergence criteria. Whatever Mr Merchant chose to do in the privacy of a public park was his own affair and Mr Merchant has quite rightly said that he will not resign, thus bringing an end once and for all to the sleaze factor which everyone in the country finds so boring when compared to the real issues which are:

1. Sleaze.
2. Sleaze.
3. Cheese (from the freezer).

I think I am rather tired. It has been a long day and I had better look at this entry again in the morning.

Friday

Good news from Scotland. Mr Allan Stewart whom I have never heard of has resigned as a Conservative candidate because he is an alcoholic who is having an extra-marital affair.

This shows he is an honourable man and just the sort of person we should have as an MP. He will be a great loss. His place is to be taken by Mr Sir Michael Hirst whom I have also never heard of but who everyone says is a very honourable man. He is a safe pair of hands and will draw a line under the sleaze once and for all.

Saturday

Mr Hirst's hands are not so safe after all it turns out. "You mean they have been down someone else's trousers?" said my wife Norman rather crudely in my judgement as she wrapped all our ornaments up and put them in a tea chest — no doubt as part of her spring cleaning activities.

Mr Sir Michael has written to me saying that due to his past indiscretions he has had to step down. He has done the decent thing and not "the indecent thing" as Norman unhelpfully added as she put our glass paperweight full of multi-coloured sand from the Isle of Wight into an old copy of the Daily Telegraph with Petronella Wyatt interviewing Liz Hurley on the front.

Sunday

It is my birthday. Oh yes. I am 54. "What is my birthday surprise?" I said to Norman. "No one has resigned today," she told me. "Not even Neil Hamilton," she added in no small measure ruining the day.

Later we celebrated with a special birthday frozen cheese-cake which mysteriously had the words "Goodbye Downing Street!" picked out on the top in pink icing sugar.

Monday

I have decided to take a really tough line on sleaze. I have written a letter to every single constituency party in the country saying that any MP who is found guilty of sleaze will have to answer to me personally in my office on May 2nd. Oh yes. I also told them that no one has been found guilty of anything and it is up to the local associations to do as they see fit. I signed the letter "J. Major, The Prime Minister, (oh yes I am), Downing Street".

SHAME OF VICE GIRL CAUGHT WITH TORY MP

by Our Political Staff **Lunchtime O'Penairsex**

A 17-YEAR-OLD Soho hostess wept last night as her career as a top slapper lay in ruins after revelations about her association with a 47-year-old member of Parliament.

"I am so ashamed," Miss Cocks told reporters brandishing cheque books "I can't believe I went off for a grope in the park with a Tory MP. It was a moment of sheer madness.

"I have made a terrible mistake," Miss Cocks admitted, "but my pimp is standing by me and I just hope the vice community can find it in their hearts to forgive this one indiscretion."

The MP, Mr Piers Pornmerchant, was unapologetic last night.

"What did she expect? I'm a Tory MP! She must have known what she was letting herself in for. What a fool!"

Miss Cocks may still be forced to resign from her post at the Pussies 'R Us Executive Relief Club in Dean Street.

Said the furious owner, Mr Slizi Weezy: "I have no comment to make at present. I will have to consult the committee on the damage that Miss Cocks's actions have done to the reputation of the club. Her previous record as a first-rate local scrubber, however, will be taken into account."

John Major is finished.

EASTER BUNNY 'JUST A MYTH'

by Our Religious Affairs Staff
Peter Pan and Sister Wendy

THE traditional Easter bunny, beloved of children all over the world, is nothing more than a piece of "babyish gobbledygook".

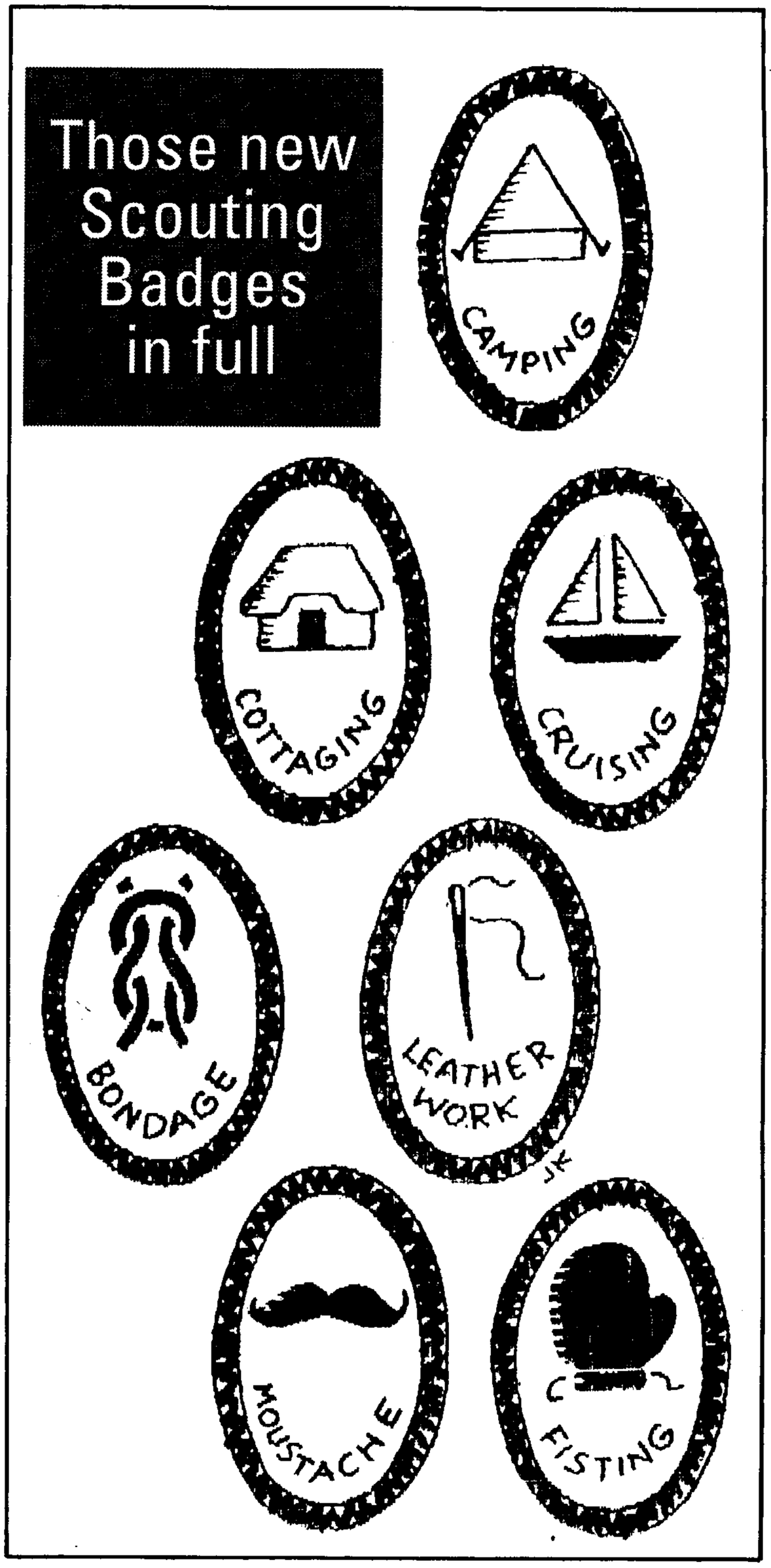
So says leading religious thinker A.N. Wilson in a new book published today *The Myth Of The Bunny.*

Wilson claims that the bunny was probably a squirrel, an animal common in mediaeval Europe, which became the centre of a cult which was later taken over by Nordic rabbit-lovers who superimposed their own mythology on the original version.

The subsequent addition of supporting religious iconography, including the "Easter Chick", the wearing of bonnets and the ritual consumption of Cadbury's creme eggs, was all just a distortion of the original squirrel cult which flourished in Bohemia from the 12th Century onwards.

"There is no historical proof," Wilson argues, "that the Easter bunny ever hid eggs round people's gardens, and it is utterly babyish to pretend that he did, as a lot of silly Deans would have us believe."

COMING SOON: A.N. Wilson Attacks the Tooth Fairy.



Celeb

LIGGER

DEBS, YOU DON'T SERIOUSLY INTEND WEARING THAT DRESS TO THE PREMIERE TONIGHT DO YOU?
WHY? WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?
IT'S A BIT REVEALING ISN'T IT, BABES?
DARLING THIS IS ONE OF GEORGIO'S MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATIONS.
BUT DEBS. THAT FROCK... IT'S TOTALLY TRANSPARENT!
SO PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE RIGHT THROUGH IT. SO WHAT?
I'M DESPERATE TO BE PHOTOGRAPHED AND I DON'T CARE WHO KNOWS IT. OKAY?

Eye Exclusive

CASH FOR JOKES SCANDAL

Fayed gave 'huge sums'

by Our Media Staff
James Sleaze-Milne

THE Egyptian-born businessman Mr Mohamed Al-Fayed was today revealed to have given "thousands of pounds" to a number of prominent journalists in the belief that he would receive "jokes" in return.

But instead the hacks merely pocketed the money and went out for expensive lunches. The beneficiaries included **Mr Stewart Steven**, who received over £200,000 as well as lavish refurbishments to his luxury Wiltshire home; **Mr Peter McHackey**, who received an estimated £175,000 much of it described as "expenses" and **Mr Paul Spike**, an American, who received 35p.

Punch Drunk

All three men deny that there was any kind of deal with Mr Fayed.

"I never had any intention of providing jokes for Mr Fayed," said a spokesman for all three men. "He was just a very generous man who occasionally gave us large cheques because he was that sort of person."

Mahood Al Fayed

An angry Mr Fayed yesterday told reporters "These f***ing bastards have taken my f***ing money. Where are my f***ing jokes?."

A spokesman for Mr Fayed, Mr Mohammed Cole, translated his employer's remarks as follows: "Mr Winston Churchill Fayed is a very upright and patriotic English gentleman whose only desire is to restore standards of humour to public life."

"Achilles! Those heels will be the death of you"

JUDGE SENDS HIMSELF TO GAOL

by our Legal Staff **Joshua RosenKavalier**

LEGAL history was made today when for the first time in 900 years a judge sent himself to prison for contempt of his own court.

Mr Justice Cocklecarrot, 96, passed himself a note during the long and boring case reading: "Wake up, old boy, and try to look as if you know what's going on."

Having read the note, the judge immediately sent himself down for 30 years.

"It is intolerable," he said "that the whole course of justice can be put in jeopardy by the failure of myself to stay awake.

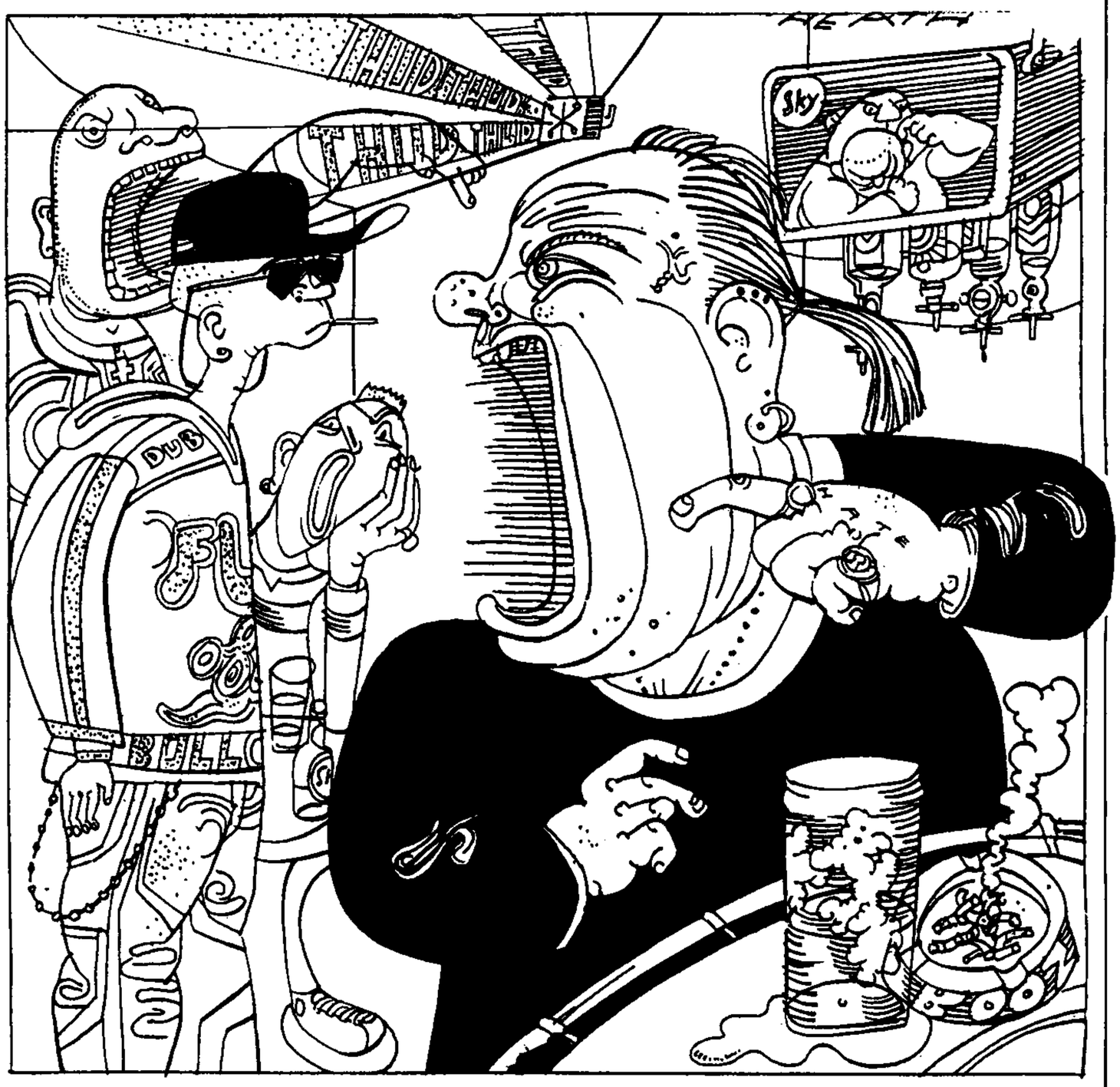
"Judges know when they are appointed," he continued, "that it is their duty to stay awake and try to follow what is happening in their courtroom.

"My failure in this respect," he concluded "is unpardonable and I merit the very gravest penalty that the law can allow."

He later, however, overturned his own verdict, after appealing to himself, and went off to lunch at the Garrick Club.

Harry Enfield's **Class Bores**
Drawn by **Michael Heath**
10. The Ethics of Taxation

"I ain't paying tax why should I pay tax? Fucking cheek! This old lady, right, it's her fault. I gone round there to mend her tap that's leaking — piece of piss, the washer just needed tightening, so I've charged her two hundred quid cash right? and she's got lippy and says I'm rippin' her off I mean fuck off she's 85 and she can't take it wiv 'er can she? So in the end she gets it out of her life savings jar and there was another 40 quid in there left over, the greedy cow, so I had that'n all for the trouble she caused me and now the bitch's written to the taxman and he's trying to take my money! Fucking cheek! Did *he* tighten the washer? Fuck off — I done it! Why should I pay tax? What've they ever done for me? This smart arse up the pub's gone 'taxes pay for the hospitals' and I've gone 'I'll tell you about hospitals — I've been in hospital five times after fights and every time the surgeon was a Paki! No way am I paying the wages of scum like that. Fucking cheek..."



Daily Mail
FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 1997
35p

YES, IT'S TONY BL-IRA!

by Our Political Staff
"Sir" Paul Dacre, Conservative candidate for a peerage

LABOUR leader Tony Blair is hand-in-glove with the mass-murderers of the IRA and may even have personally planted the notorious Wilmslow bomb, the *Mail* can reveal.

A highly-placed source (Michael Howard) has told the *Daily Mail* that Mr Blair's repeated refusal to support the Prevention of Terrorism Act was clear evidence of his membership of the General Army Council of the world's most sinister terrorist organisation.

Labour was sent reeling last night when further revelations in today's *Daily Mail* uncovered a secret Labour plot to hand over the running of Britain to the unions, led by Arthur Scargill.

Vote Tory

A very highly placed source indeed (Baroness Thatcher) last night told the *Daily Mail:* "It will be just like the winter of discontent all over again, with corpses lying unburied in the streets, being gnawed by rats."

Major leaps ahead in poll upset

LABOUR leader Tony Blair was yesterday in tears when an opinion poll in today's *Daily Mail* showed that John Major now has a commanding 90% lead in a key poll.

At Tory Central Office champagne corks were popping as a jubilant Dr Mawhinney held up a copy of the poll but refused to show it to anyone.

NOTE: The Tori poll was conducted on a random sample of 5 committed Tory voters.

THE ALTERNATIVE VOICE

Every week **Dave Spart**, Head of English at the John Mortimer Comprehensive, Ealing, and co-chair of the Ex-ILEA Teachers Against Teaching Cooperative, writes on the story behind the news.

THE totally sickening sight of so-called socialist David Blunkett paying lip service to Thatcherite neo-fascist educational elitism, ie standards, inspections and tests which are totally alien to any meaningful learning environment, er... what we demand as professional pedagogic operatives is a) the immediate sacking of the Chief Inspector of Schools, a known fascist and Thatcherite stooge, c) the disbanding of so-called OFSTED which is a totally irrelevant and outmoded institution and 3) the total and utter dismantlement of the Assisted Places scheme, er... the failure to comply with the above foregoing conditions as laid down above to result in an immediate withdrawal of labour, ie, er... a strike and furthermore the television programme "Chalk" is a total insult to the teaching profession suggesting as it does that teachers are illiterate and incompetent which proves this programme is total and utter crap, real crap, I mean
(continued p.94)

NEASDEN LOSE POINTS APPEAL

by **E.I. Erewego**, Our Man At The Hearing With A Free Sample Of Isle Of Man Vodka Style Drink And A Number Of Used Copies Of Various "Lads" Magazines To Sell Or Part Exchange For Similar Items

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations yesterday when a FA disciplinary committee told Neasden FC that its three point penalty would stand. The controversial decision followed an incident earlier in the season when the entire Dollis Hill squad failed to show up at Neasden Bridge for a crucial local derby.

Under rule 94/b section G, the FA awarded Neasden all three points, a verdict that their ashen-faced manager, Ron Knee, 57, was quick to condemn, both then and now.

Getting The Point

Speaking last night at the luxury Neasdama Inn Hotel, where the appeal was heard, the tight-lipped soccer supremo told reporters that Neasden had never won a single point in any shape or form during the entire 102 years of the club's history. "Dollis Hill could have sent a squad of OAPs in wheelchairs and still played us off the park," he fumed. "We are the worst team in the world and a move from the foot of the table will do untold damage to our reputation."

Point Of Order

When they were told the news, Neasden fans (Sid and Doris Bonkers) responded in an unexpectedly restrained fashion by setting fire only to cars with "FA Official" parking stickers on the windscreen. Said an emotional Sid: "To lose our bottom rung status in the North Circular Relegation League is a human tragedy of unprecedented proportions, akin to the bombing of Hiroshima and the Sack of Rome in 1527."

Point Taken

With his team forced out of the relegation zone, Knee is uncertain as to his next move. "I will be sleeping on the matter," he said, "but the Court of Human Rights, His Holiness, Pope John Paul and the producers of 'Jim'll Fix It' are all options I am considering very seriously."

Ron Knee is 57.

LATE RESULT

Bisodol Champions League, 1st round, 2nd leg replay

Neasden	0
Heroes of Telemark	6

(Pevsner 1 [o.g.], Hale 2, Bopp 3)

Telemark win 43-0 on aggregate

From the Referendum Bunker

Bulletin No. 94

Achtung!

So, Mr Addis, I don't think we have had the pleasure of meeting before.

They tell me you are the Editor of the Daily Express. Not a newspaper I see very often, I'm afraid.

But I see in this copy here that you have tried to infiltrate my organisation!!

(Voice rises to hysterical scream as he tears Daily Express into pieces)

You thought you were so clever Mr Addis-Bond. You tried to sneak one of your agents into the Marmite Army, so that he could come up with some cock-and-bull story about me breaking the law by paying people to vote for me. Fool!

As if I had any need to stoop so low. Don't you realise that the people of England are flocking to me in their threes and fours? — I mean millions?

We have ways of dealing with people like you, Mr Addis. Sad, snivelling little vermin that you are.

I want you to meet one of my most deadly associates, a man whose very name strikes terror into the heart of any journalist.

Carla, bring in Mr Carter-Ruck.

(Sultry Italian temptress in skin-tight "I Love Peter Mandelson" t-shirt and matching leather briefs leads in elderly white-haired legal person in pin-stripe trousers)

Not so confident now, Mr Addis, I think!

(Before the gibbering Addis can speak, the unexpectedly agile octogenarian lawyer leaps across the room at the Daily Express editor, and knocks him to the floor with a perfectly delivered writ)

Well done, my good and faithful servant, you have lost none of your old deadly skill.

(Carter-Ruck immediately whips out bill for £7 million and hands it to Sir James)

And now, Mr Addis, you are beginning to bore me, especially as you are unconscious.

Taki, feed Mr Addis to the killer terrapins (courtesy of the J Aspinall Terrapinerama, Port Lympne, Kent — Vacancies for Zookeepers Always Available).

(Swarthy Greek in tennis gear drops recumbent editor into bubbling pool of molten Marmite. Sir James jumps onto passing Hale-Bopp comet to address mass-rally of his followers on Alpha Centauri (Sid and Doris Zzgbgbzbbzz) on the Single European Cucumber)

Issued by the

REFERENDUM PARTY

of Great Britain

(Prop. Sir James Goldpost)

FREE POT OF MARMITE FOR EVERY VOTE

KEN BEHAVING BADLY

QUEEN RAPPED BY THATCHER OVER ARMS

by Our Heraldic Staff **Hugh Montgomery Massive-Snob**

HER Majesty the Queen has been reprimanded by Mrs Thatcher for using the Royal Crest on her stationery.

The Royal Coat of Arms appears next to the name Elizabeth Regina which, according to Mrs Thatcher, suggests that the Queen is in some way Head of State.

A spokesman said: "As is well known, Mrs Thatcher is the supreme ruler of the universe and is the only person entitled to use the regal crest and to be addressed as Her Majesty."

Prince Denis of Thatcher is 92° proof. *(Reuters)*

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

WE'LL MAKE YOU A STAR.... WE'LL GIVE YOU FIVE MILLION POUNDS FOR SIGNING WITH US, THEN TEN MILLION A YEAR. HOW DOES THAT SOUND?
AGENCY
GOSH.....I FIND IT SO HARD TO DIGEST.
I KNOW. THAT'S WHY WE WANT YOU!
AGENC

Radio Four

What you missed...

The Today Programme

Sue MacGhastly: ...and the news is just coming in, I'm delighted to say, that a bomb has gone off in Wilmslow, and we're going over to Ken Stiggis who is on the spot, only six miles down the motorway. Ken, what can you tell us?

Stiggis: Well, Sue, from what I've just heard on the *Today Programme*, there's been a bomb explosion in Wilmslow.

MacGhastly: Do we have any details yet about how many people might be injured and how badly?

Stiggis: No, Sue, they haven't said anything about that on the radio.

MacGhastly: So you can't even give us any figures about the number of people who haven't been injured?

Stiggis: It's really too early to give you any figures, Sue.

MacGhastly: Any eyewitness reports of bodies flying through thee air, or scenes of indescribable horror?

Stiggis: No, Sue, unfortunately not.

MacGhastly: Well, we'll keep you informed so that you can tell us what's going on in time for the 8 o'clock News. And now it's time for Thought for the Day from Mr Kelvin Bairnsfather who is a reader in Satanic Studies at the Beelzebub Institute in Slough.

Bairnsfather: Sitting in the studio just now, I heard the terrible news of the massacre in Wilmslow, and my heart went out to all the families who have been so cruelly blown up by this heartless act. But we Satanists have a saying, which my old auntie Wanda always used to quote, that if you just whistle a happy tune, all your troubles will go away. Thank you Sue, thank you Jim.

MacGhastly: Thank you, Kelvin. And we're just getting news of a mass-suicide in America. There must be dead there, surely?

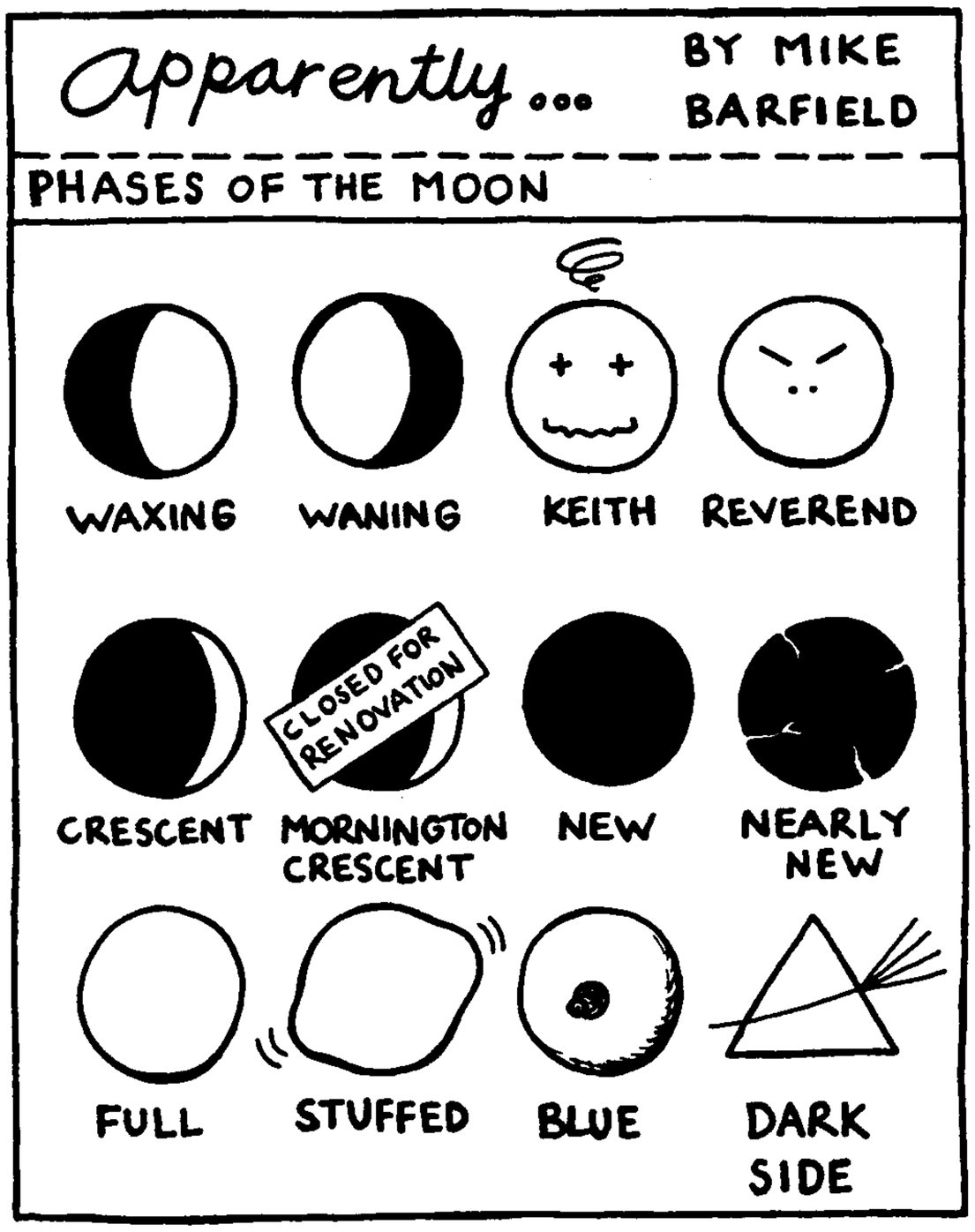
Humphrys: Ha, ha, ha.

MacGhastly: We haven't got any details yet, but that's not going to stop us. We're going over now to Ken Stiggis in Wilmslow. What can you tell us about this mass-suicide, Ken?

Stiggis: Well, Sue, apparently a lot of people have died in America. We're still a little in the dark about how many bodies there are, and whether they're flying through the air, or just lying in neat rows on the ground. As soon as I hear anything more I'll let you know.

Humphrys: And now, the 8 o'clock news.

Brian Perkins *(for it is he):* On this programme just now, it was reported that a lot of people are dead in America but that Ken Stiggis doesn't know much more about it... *(Continued for 94 minutes)*



IRA TO HIRE STAGECOACH SHOCK

by Our Railway Staff **John Le Carriage**

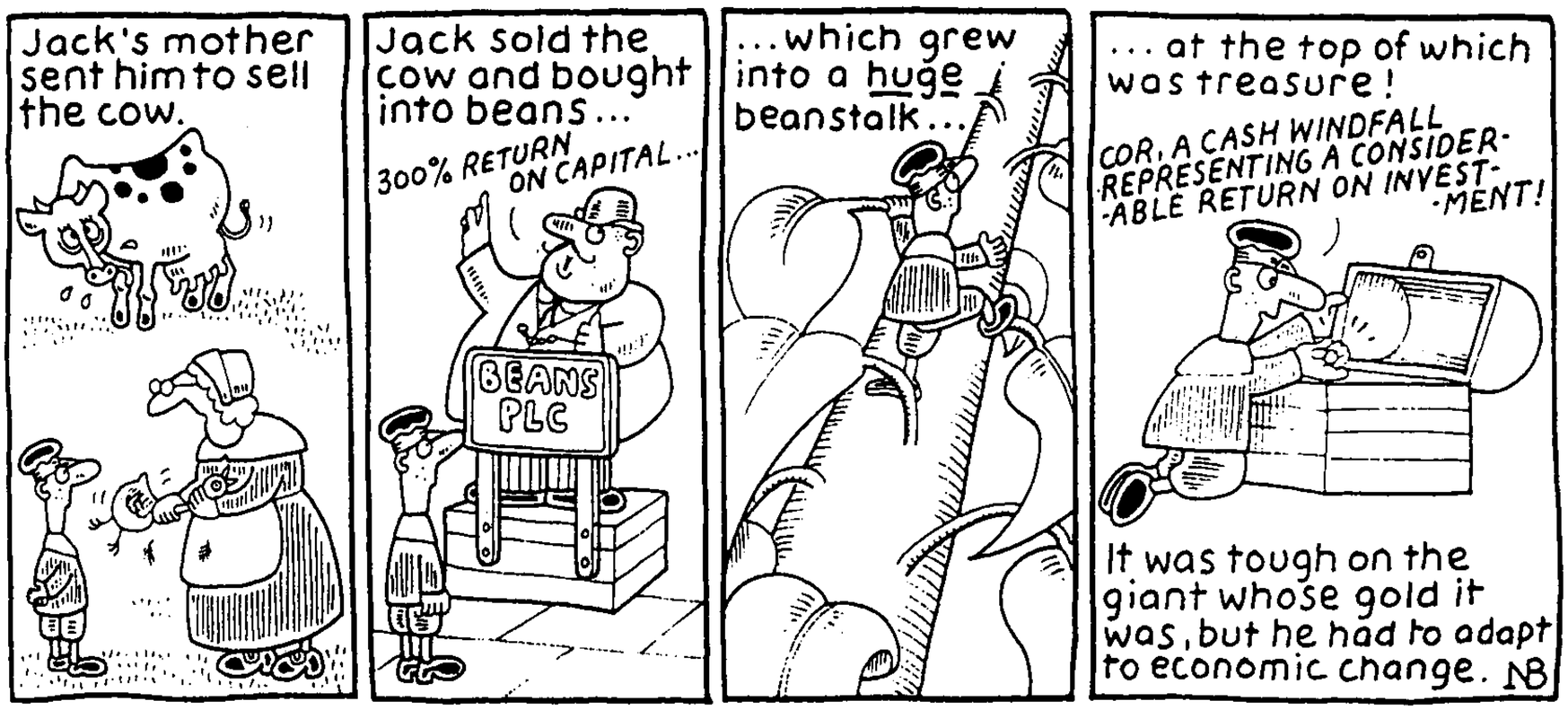
FOLLOWING the failure of their attempt to bring Britain's railways to a halt by blowing up the signal box at Wilmslow, Cheshire, the IRA are now planning a much more daring assault on the nation's train system.

The General Council of the IRA, we can reveal, is planning to approach Mr Brian Souter, the head of Stagecoach, asking him to take over the entire rail network.

"If he can do to the rest of the system what he's already done to the South West," said spokesman Mr Shameless O'Semtex, "then we are home and dry."

YOUR TRAINS TONIGHT

All cancelled owing to the wrong type of management


TORYTIME: Jack & the Beanstalk
Jack's mother sent him to sell the cow.
Jack sold the cow and bought into beans...
300% RETURN ON CAPITAL...
BEANS PLC
...which grew into a huge beanstalk...
...at the top of which was treasure!
COR, A CASH WINDFALL REPRESENTING A CONSIDERABLE RETURN ON INVESTMENT!
It was tough on the giant whose gold it was, but he had to adapt to economic change. NB

The 18-year-old orphan, who lost both legs in a train crash as a toddler, is living on the Roehampton Hospital campus while she is fitted with artificial limbs.

Since her heart-warming story was published in local papers, she has been rushed off her feet, taking up invitations from concerned readers wanting to meet her and show her the sights of London.

Wandsworth Borough News

Literary Review

More of the samey

Birds of Prey
Wilbur Smith
(Macmillan, £16.99)

THE real bestseller, as Anthony Blond sagely points out in his trade survey *The Book Book*, needs no hype: the Harold Robbinses of this world can mark publication day by a magnum on the St Tropez verandah rather than a publicity trip to London.

You don't believe me? Think how many acres of advertising and lubricious revelation it took to sell a thousand copies of Jeanette's last one. Meanwhile dear old Wilbur, 30 years in the business, comes sailing up out of nowhere, unreviewed and unpublicised, to flog 10,000 in his first week and make the *Sunset Times* bestseller list a case of eclipse first and the rest nowhere.

What is it about Wilbur, Jack, Jackie, Cathy and the rest of these behemoths whose careers began when most of our leading young novelists were still at prep school? Every so often the style sections offer up a survey of "new trends in publishing", but from the aga saga to Nick Hornby, each is no more than a passing fad compared to Wilbur and co. How do they do it? As it happens, by not doing anything. Curiously enough, in an industry desperate for novelty the big boys (and girls) sell their millions by staying exactly the same.

Or rather, by turning into epically exaggerated versions of their original selves. Wilbur here is a case in point. In fact, untrendily enough, *Birds of Prey* is an historical, set in the mid-17th century, but this still leaves plenty of scope for traditional Smith standfasts such as sex, sturdy blackamoors and rampaging South African fauna. It's 1667, me hearties, at the fag-end of the Anglo-Dutch wars, and an English privateer named Sir Francis Courteney is grimly chasing galleons off the Cape of Good Hope.

A particularly adept raid on The Resolution nabs not only tons of bullion and spices but the Cape's newly appointed governor and his hoyden of a wife. Whereupon all manner of serviceable plot lines kick into gear: bluff young Hal Courteney takes a shine to nymphomaniac Katinka, while the Dutch officer charged with conveying the ransom demand joins fores with Sir Francis's erstwhile chum the Earl of Cumbrae to seize the former's accumulated boodle.

This being Wilbur, you get the lot: shark attacks, man-eating crocodiles, floggings, hangings, surgery with kitchen knives. In the way of books of this kind, you also get a large amount of rather overemphatic research, in this case of a nautical kind ("Those topgallants are luffing", "Look there, in the futtock-shrouds!" etc etc). Oddly enough, though, what *Birds of Prey* really looks to be about is penises. Rather like Jack Higgins, whose meteorological fixation seeps into the duffest passages of his dialogue, Wilbur has reached a point in his career where his obsessions are clearly becoming ungovernable.

Within a page or two Aboli the hulking black slave is getting out his "long black python" to cauterize Hal's wounded ear with urine. Hal notes that it "overflows his fist by half of its length." Golly gosh! A bit later, as Sir Francis and the boys approach the Dutch ship, Katinka notices that a roguish tar in the rigging is making obscene gestures. Predictably "what the seaman was offering her was bulky enough to overflow his cupped hands". Things reach fever pitch when the captured babe is installed in a cabin next to Hal's, allowing him to peer pop-eyed through a hole in the wood as she goes about her ablutions. And, yup, "the rod he held between his fingers was as hard as a bone and endowed with a throbbing life of its own." Soon after this, having noticed the said organ jumping about "like the springy branch of a sapling", she offers hand relief through the aperture.

Meanwhile stout Aboli is on hand to provide much sagacious advice. (Sample: "A man's passion is like a fire in tall, dry grass, hot and furious, but soon spent. A woman's is like a magician's cauldron that must simmer long upon the coals before it can bring forth its spell.") Although a whole heap of strokes, counter-strokes, imprisonments and agonising deaths precede a happy ending for Hal and the new love interest (Katinka wasn't no good, you see), in the end *Birds of Prey* simply reduces itself to a series of sensations, gory and sadistic by turns (Katinka, in particular, just loves taking a chair by the yard-arm while the malcontents are being flogged).

Usually one tries to avoid a personal note, but what I'd really like to know is what Mrs Smith, to whom the last 22 of these things have been dedicated, thinks of it all.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"MOST WOMEN'S decision to marry is based on sexual attraction for a man they find good-looking; this usually dooms the marriage to divorce or a lifetime of regrets. In my experience, sexual attraction runs its course in two or three years."

— Petronella Wyatt, daughter of Woodrow Wyatt, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 March 1997

"ANYONE who says he approaches a wife, or vice versa, after three years with the same excitement as in the first two years of lovemaking is a liar, or, more politely, is deluding himself or herself."

— Woodrow Wyatt, in his autobiography *Confessions of an Optimist* (1985).

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

☐ **THE British Council-sponsored *New Writing Six*, edited by A.S.Byatt and Peter Porter (Vintage £6.99), is a good example of how anthologies of this kind get compiled.**

Cheeringly, the *New Writing* series welcomes submissions from the general public. How odd, then, to find so many of A.S.Byatt's legion of literary chums — for example Anthony Thwaite, Louis de Bernières, Robert Irwin and David Malouf — bulking out the list of contributors.

Still, it's pleasing to see a number of relative unknowns making their debut in such exalted company — and in particular to find an entry form a young contributor named Rebecca Swift, A.S. Byatt's niece.

■ MORE news from the Pearson group, which wrote off 40 percent of 1996's profits, £100m, thanks to unauthorised price-cutting by an over-enthusiastic employee of Penguin Books USA.

Pearson's incredibly brilliant finance director, John "On the Make" Makinson, told staff "there will be a 30-day period, starting today, during which anyone should feel free to discuss control problems (even ones they've created) with their operating company chief executive, or with me, without fear of disciplinary action".

The appeal for whistleblowers to inform their managers of "problems" has one small flaw: it is the managers themselves who are the problem. Makinson admits as much: "I am asking the finance directors of all operating companies to think carefully about whether they have the right blend of skills and experience in place. They will also make sure that people's responsibilities are clear..."

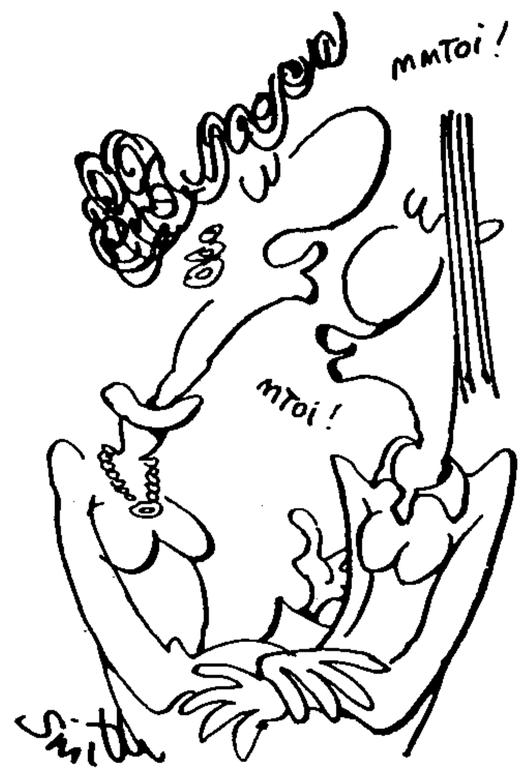
But what of Makinson's own responsibilities? As finance director of the Pearson group, he should have been using his "skills and experience" to keep a close eye on what Penguin USA was up to. Since he clearly did nothing of the sort, why isn't he carrying the can?

☐ *BEING a literary editor is a delicate task.*

At the Observer former Faber editorial director Robert McCrum has twice run reviews of Faber Books written by Faber authors.

Is this a particularly good move by McCrummy?

'Bookworm'



"Equity minimum, darling — three kisses"

LUVVIES

"I was so used up, I said I honestly don't know if I can do it again. She said: 'Let me give you my strength.' She took my hands in hers, and she just looked at me. We stood there with the crew working around us, and she just looked at me. I don't know what she was thinking, maybe the laundry list, but I saw in her eyes, she let me see who she was, the fears, the pain, everything... and I started crying. She stepped back, and we did it another time."

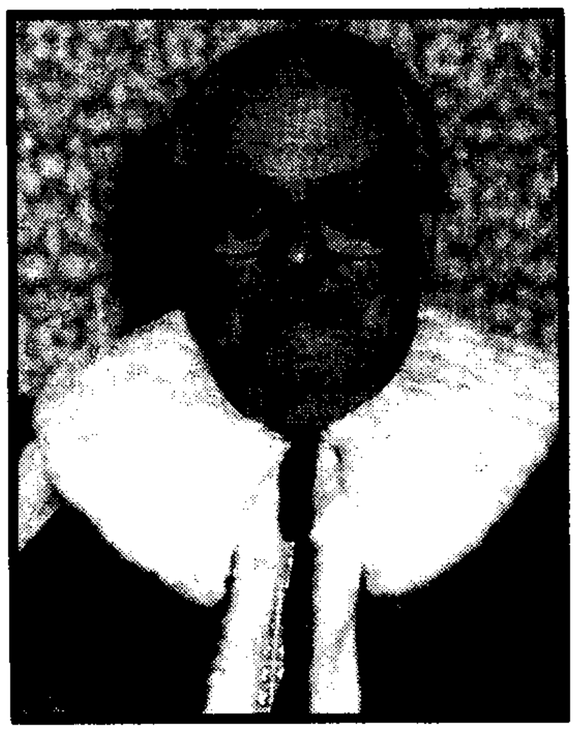
BARBARA HERSEY
(on director Jane Campion)
Time Out

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.

SNIPCOCK & TWEED
IT JUST GOES TO SHOW - THE BRITISH PUBLIC AREN'T ALL MORONS
HERODOTUS
HERODOTUS
AS SEEN IN 'THE ENGLISH PATIENT'
WE SHOULD GET HIM TO DO A SEQUEL!
HERODOTUS
AS SEEN IN 'THE ENGLISH PATIENT'

footnotes

THE LORDY AND THE TRAMP



I'VE A JOB: Ivor Richard QC, PC

NO ONE is more certain of a place in the forthcoming Labour cabinet than the Rt Hon Lord Richard of Ammanford PC QC, a former UK representative at the United Nations and current Labour leader in the House of Lords.

Imagine his lordship's horror, therefore, when his conduct of the defence in a recent murder case was denounced in the court of appeal last month as "contrary to the promptings of reason and good sense".

Susan McGregor, a down-and-out alcoholic, was appealing against her conviction for murdering an elderly woman called Sheila Taylor. Mrs Taylor had been dead and buried for three years before police suspicions about her death were aroused — by Susan McGregor, who told them the old lady had been strangled by McGregor's companion and lover, Michael Docherty.

Taylor's body was exhumed and showed signs of strangulation. McGregor then told the police, twice, that *she* had done the murder. She and Docherty were arrested, tried and convicted.

Susan McGregor met her leading barrister, Lord Richard, once for less than an hour before her trial. Her case was fought on the sole ground that Mrs Taylor had not been murdered. There were two difficulties with this line. First, the thrust of the forensic evidence, even from the defence expert, was that the old lady had been strangled. Secondly, McGregor had confessed. Lord Richard tried to exclude her confessions from the jury on the grounds that she had been drunk. But when she made her second confession McGregor was sober. Faced with strong expert evidence that the old lady was murdered, and a clear and sober confession, the jury found McGregor guilty.

After the case, she sacked her lawyers, hired new ones and appealed. Her new barrister, Vera Baird, argued that McGregor's lawyers had let her down at her trial. Quoting from a famous case where a conviction was quashed on appeal because of inadequate representation by counsel, she twice criticised Lord Richard's conduct of the case as "contrary to the promptings of reason and good sense".

Her main point was that the jury was given no explanation for McGregor's confession. The defence, she argued, should have commissioned psychiatric reports into McGregor's vulnerability, especially to Docherty. There were, Ms Baird reminded the judges, social service reports which proved that McGregor had again and again been beaten up and hospitalised by Docherty, and that she lived in permanent terror of him.

This could well have explained why she changed her original (and highly credible) story — that Docherty did the murder — to her confession that she had done it. A psychiatric report had now been commissioned by her new lawyers. It concluded that Susan McGregor was a battered woman suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder which seriously affected her judgement. Faced with such a report at the trial, Vera Baird argued, the judge might well have excluded McGregor's confession — the only substantial evidence against her.

The court of appeal judges led by Lord Justice Judge were outraged at this criticism of Lord Richard. They accused McGregor's new lawyers of "interrogating" Richard — by writing him a letter asking him to explain his conduct of the defence, a letter to which he did not reply. They were scornful of the suggestion that McGregor might have confessed for fear of Docherty. The criticism of Richard was "without foundation" and "should never have been made".

The appeal was dismissed. Lord Richard, who gave evidence, emerged from the court without a stain on his reputation, more qualified than ever to serve in the next cabinet. His record as a criminal barrister is every bit as distinguished as that of Lord Justice Judge, whom *Eye* readers will know best as the prosecutor of the Bridgewater Four, or as prosecution counsel at the first unsuccessful appeal of the Birmingham Six, or as triumphant prosecutor in a whole host of cases which relied on the expert testimony of the West Midlands serious crimes squad (RIP).

ENTERPRISING ARCHIE

■ NO ONE should underestimate the relentless persistence of the Rt Hon Sir Archibald Hamilton, Tory MP for Epsom and Ewell.

After the dismal flop of his company's ambitious plans to profit from a former naval establishment which Sir Archie closed down in 1992 when he was armed services minister, an associated company is trying again with another one.

SIR ARCHIE HAMILTON MP

Eye 862 (30 December 1994) reported the efforts of Sir Archie's company Crownridge Industries to develop the former royal armaments depot at Trecwyn, in Dyfed. Unhappily Sir Archie's sensitive plans for a toxic waste recycling plant in a lovely valley by a national park were not rapturously received and Crownridge was sent packing.

Now, as the news breaks of a sharp recession in the steel industry in Europe, a company called Crownridge Steel has got outline planning permission to set up a steel strip rolling mill on the site of the old mines depot at Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, which Sir Archie also closed down during his long stint (1988-1993) as armed forces minister.

The new Crownridge application is even less popular than the last one. The old mines depot has been turned into a highly popular sports arena. Pretty well the entire population of Milford Haven is in open revolt against the new plans. They are puzzled by the fact that Crownridge Steel put in its planning application on 3 February — 22 days before the company was incorporated. More worrying still was the extraordinary speed with which the county council planning committee gave consent at a specially convened meeting.

There are constant inexplicable references to the political party supported by Sir Archibald and to the fact that the father of another Crownridge director, Rhodri Philips, is Lord St Davids, a Tory whip in the Lords. One person who wishes Sir Archibald and his colleagues would stay out of south Wales at least until May is the Kensington barrister called Williams who is fighting marginal Pembroke for the Tories and whose unfortunate initials are O.J.

WAILY WASS

■ MORE rotten news from Nomura Securities, the big Japanese stockbroker where Mr Setsuya Tabuchi, known as "Mr Big", and Yoshihisa Tabuchi (no relation), known as "Mr Little", have resigned from the board for the second time in two years.

Their resignations follow that of the president Hideo Sakamaki, and Nomura's admission that it has dealt with organised corporate gangsters. The last time the Tabuchis resigned was after an inquiry proved that they had helped a prominent gangster swipe the shares of a railway company.

All this makes wretched news for the mandarins at our own ministry of defence who recently sold nearly all the armed services married quarters in Britain to the stockbroker's British arm, Nomura International. Another former mandarin who must be upset is Sir Douglas Wass, permanent secretary at the treasury from 1974 to 1983, who is chairman of Nomura International.

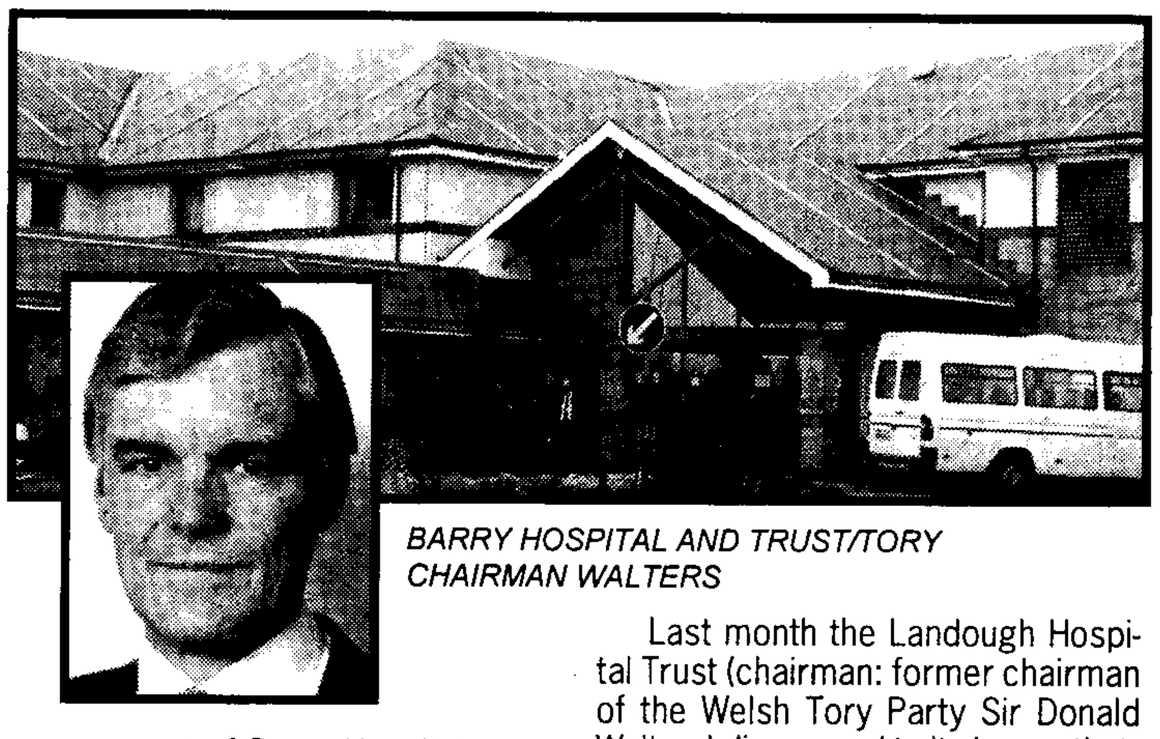
Redwood's Net on the Tiles

THE NEW unreadable book by John Redwood, sensitively published during the election campaign to cause maximum embarrassment to John Major, devotes many pages to the glories of privatisation, especially in the health service.

Anyone who wants to test these theories should pay a visit to the brand new community hospital in Barry, south Wales.

The hospital was built by Sir Robert McAlpine, the family firm of the former treasurer of the Tory party, Alistair McAlpine. But there was an irritating element of public enterprise in the project in the shape of the Welsh Health and Community Services Association (WHCSA), which acted as project manager.

When Redwood became secretary of state for Wales in 1993, he ordered a clean-up of any nasty deposits of public enterprise still lying around. Thus the project management at Barry hospital was privatised. The better — and more expensive architects and surveyors — were replaced by "more affordable" personnel, and in 1996 the whole project



BARRY HOSPITAL AND TRUST/TORY CHAIRMAN WALTERS

management of Barry Hospital was handed to Beard Dove Ltd, a subsidiary of Capita plc.

All sorts of things have gone wrong at the hospital. Tiles from the roof have been falling off in the high winds. To contain the tiles, the whole roof has been covered in green plastic netting, earning the hospital the nickname, the Ena Sharples Memorial home. The boilers were so disastrous that throughout last winter patients were shoved from ward to ward to keep warm.

Last month the Landough Hospital Trust (chairman: former chairman of the Welsh Tory Party Sir Donald Walters) discovered to its horror that, in its own words, "minimal progress has been made" in putting any of this right. The remedy was obvious. Beard Dove was "relinquished" from its contract and the project management went back to, er, WHCSA...whose operation at Barry Hospital John Redwood had insisted on privatising.

WHCSA is now negotiating with McAlpines to see how much more public money has to be spent to save the hospital from the private enterprise disasters which have engulfed it.

HOOPER SCOOPER

■ TORY stalwart Angela Hooper features in one of the few good stories to be found in Alistair McAlpine's recent memoirs.

He reports a meeting at Tory central office in which Hooper, then a Tory official, sat opposite the party chairman of the day, Cecil Parkinson, who mistook her facial twitch as an amorous advance and responded warmly.

How appropriate, then, that in 1993 Hooper was appointed by Parkinson's successor as transport secretary to chair the Rail Users' Consultative Committee for Southern England.

RUCCs were set up all over the country to represent rail users after railway privatisation, which was first announced by Cecil Parkinson to enthuse the faithful at the 1988 Tory party conference.

The chairmen and chairwomen of RUCCs are appointed by the secretary of state and therefore include a fair sprinkling of known Tory stalwarts like Angela Hooper. But any embarrassment she may have suffered at the McAlpine anecdote is as nothing compared to that caused by the flood of furious complaints pouring into her committee over the South West Trains fiasco.

ANGELA HOOPER CBE

Many of the complaints crudely blame the privatisation for which her party is responsible. She is boldly neutral on such matters, and is supported in her neutrality by her colleague on the RUCC, Alan Shotter, a former Conservative councillor in Southampton. It is hardly a year since Mr Shotter was telling colleagues "just wait until Stagecoach (owners of South West Trains) get a chance to show what they can do".

The *Eye* asked the well-staffed press office at the Central Rail Users Consultative Committee how many members of RUCCs all over the country are connected with the Tory party, but no one there could say.

Helping Hance

■ UNTIL last spring Hance Fullerton was chief executive of Grampian Enterprise, a quango which assists enterprise in the north of Scotland with taxpayers' money. He strongly supported an investment of half a million pounds taxpayers' money to buy a majority stake in the new European Environmental Management Institute (EEMI).

A glowing press release on 6 April last year from the PR company Shandwick boasted that "EEMI will combine the strengths of existing scientific expertise within the Aberdeen Research Consortium (ARC) — a partnership between the universities and research institutes in the area — with private commercial management".

The release disclosed the name of the new chairman of EEMI: Mr Hance Fullerton. Mr Fullerton is also chairman of the Aberdeen Royal Hospitals Trust. The *Eye* contacted him there and asked him:

1 Do you think it is appropriate for a chief executive in charge of an organisation which gives government grants later to join a commercial company which received a grant from that organisation?

2 Do you think that your acceptance of the job at EEMI casts doubt on the neutrality of Grampian Enterprise and leaves the whole system of government grant aid to industry in Scotland open to the charge that "they are all in it together"?

3 Is your chairmanship at EEMI a paid position and if so what is your annual remuneration there?

Here is Mr Fullerton's reply in full:

The Grampian Enterprise funding in EEMI was not a grant but a majority equity stake in the company. Subsequent to the approval of the equity funding, Grampian Enterprise Board invited me to become the first chairman of the company during its formative period. Remuneration to the chairman will be declared in the annual accounts for the company in due course.

TREE FRIENDLY: Chairman Fullerton(rt)

NEWS FROM THE SIN BRYNS

■ STARTLING new evidence that the child abuse scandal in north Wales is not confined to the staff of children's homes but may also involve powerful outsiders was heard at the Waterhouse inquiry on 12 March.

A 37-year-old Welshman was asked by counsel to the inquiry, Gerard Elias QC, about allegations he had made to police in December 1994 against a man he said he met while he was in care at a children's home at Bersham. The man was not a member of staff. As soon as he was asked for details about the man, however, the witness took fright.

Question: *Can you tell us how you knew him?*

Answer: *No.*

Q: *Why not?*

A: *I am scared of the people he knows, and I am scared.*

Asked why he was scared, the witness replied: "Because he got away. I don't believe you can touch the man. I don't believe that people want to."

Reluctantly the witness then agreed that he met the man during his visits to another home, Bryn Estyn. But then he clammed up again. Finally, the inquiry chairman, Sir Ronald Waterhouse, asked him:

Q: Is your fear of this man or his associates derived from things you have read or from something that you have been told by someone?

A: Both.

On the same day another witness told the tribunal that he had been buggered twice by a man in the flat of the deputy head of Bryn Estyn, convicted abuser Peter Howarth. The man was not a member of Bryn Estyn staff. The witness said the man "buggered me twice and on the third occasion, running round like this, he was chasing after me and I went into a knife drawer like that, I just shook the knives like that, and he shouted "Peter" and went somewhere".

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG, or leave a message for him on 0171 287 3183

In the City

TORY party black propagandists, clearly desperate to halt the growing threat from the Referendum party, have been resurrecting old smears relating to the glorious business career of its supreme leader Sir James Goldsmith.

It is whispered that the stock exchange was given information concerning substantial share dealings in BAT by various offshore companies and individuals ahead of the abortive "unbundling" exercise mounted by Goldfinger and friends back in 1989. It is even claimed that stock exchange investigators were told hundreds of millions of pounds had been invested in buying BAT shares.

That much is true. Such wild allegations were made to the stock exchange by an informant. But what is also true — which naturally the smear merchants omit to mention — is that the informant who made these allegations was unable to provide an iota of evidence. He was unable to provide details of any suspicious share deals or to show any BAT purchases were based on inside information or were in any way connected with the Goldfinger group. Hardly surprising as there was no such evidence.

Quite rightly therefore no action was taken by the stock exchange. The allegations were no doubt as malicious as they were unmerited — just like their recent revival.

AFTER a lull following last year's stock exchange investigation into the increasingly blatant inspired "leaking" of bids and deals to Sunday newspapers, the financial PR men are back in their favourite business sections.

How else to explain the remarkable simultaneous revelation by both the *Sunset Times* and the *Sunday Torygraph* (30 March) of the bid approach from Hammerson to bigger property rival MEPC? No action having been taken by the stock exchange over last year's Friday night drops, doubtless it is felt safe to resume deliveries.

WELL before the latest Wall Street crash American analysts were becoming nervous about Rupert Murdoch's seemingly insatiable appetite for expensive acquisitions.

Shares in the Dirty Digger's News Corporation were at a 12-month low point *before* the Dow took its dive. Although News generates huge amounts of cash, Murdoch's cable and satellite ambitions, together with his expansions outside the core media business, require even more. Part of the problem is that many of the existing operations, such as the Fox News TV channel in the US and Star TV in Asia are running at large losses and will require substantial further investments to turn a profit. All of which is making some critics recall how Murdoch narrowly avoided paying the price for over-expansion back in 1990.

ATTEMPTS by businessmen Tony Buckingham to cover the links between his Branch Energy outfit and his mercenary friends at Executive Outcomes and Sandline International have disintegrated in the face of the Papua New Guinea fiasco.

The man in charge of the team of mercenaries hired by the Papua New Guinea prime minister for £23m was former Scots Guards colonel Tim Spicer. As is well known, the Bahamas-registered Sandline operates from the same suite of Chelsea offices as both Branch and visiting Executive Outcomes officials from South Africa. Less well known is that Spicer was awarded share options in the Vancouver-listed DiamondWorks after it acquired Branch Energy last year from Buckingham and offshore interests. So too were other former British and South African military men connected with Executive Outcomes as well as a former MI6 "spook" whose last posting was Namibia. Doubtless Buckingham tells his liberal friends, such as Sir David Steel and PR man Andrew Gifford, not to mention boardroom colleagues at the *Guardian*-controlled publishers Fifth Estate, that this is all mere coincidence.

AMONG the 1,001 plans Labour has for making life better is reform of the selection of jurors for criminal trials. The home office is already promising a green paper on proposed jury reforms which could remove the right to jury trials for fraud.

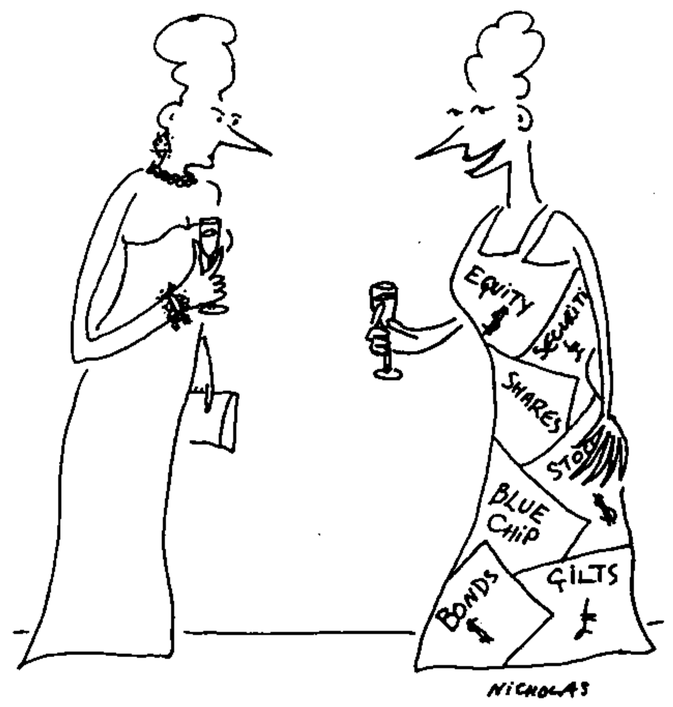
Rosalind Wright, the next head of the Serious Farce Office, wants minimum educational qualifications for jurors in fraud trials. Whether all this will result in any worthwhile change remains to be seen because there are no votes in changing the way fraud trials are conducted and even many of those who advocate change still repeat the sacred mantra that jury trials are inviolate.

One simple change which could be made without any legislative input would be for judges to require company directors, accountants, bankers and other professionals with knowledge of the world of business (even journalists who are notorious draft dodgers) called as jurors to sit on fraud juries rather than be given an automatic get out of jail card.

The recent trial of corrupt Inland Revenue inspector Michael Allcock was a classic example of how the present system works — or to be more precise does not. Every prospective juror in a suit was carrying a "sick note" from their employers or themselves. One by one they told the trial judge the overwhelming reasons, usually financial, why they could not possibly do their civic duty for three months at the Old Bailey. One by one an increasingly exasperated judge Peter Beaumont let them out.

Perhaps tiring of hearing why someone else should carry the load, Beaumont rejected the excuses of four jurors and insisted they would serve on the jury. But then Catch-22 kicked in. Defence lawyers objected to the four on the grounds that they were unwilling and therefore likely to be antagonistic. So they were removed by the prosecution. The result? The usual Old Bailey mix of the old, the young, the retired and the unemployed (they have no excuse for not serving) which passes as a jury of their peers for any one charged with fraud or corruption. Few if any white collar criminals are tried by a jury of their social, educational or business peers.

All of which may help explain why the Allcock jury were out for a week without reaching any verdicts. Only after being given a majority direction and then told to be prepared to make compromises were any verdicts forthcoming. But then, somewhat illogically and with more than a whiff of a deal done to get out of the jury room, the jury managed to find Allcock guilty on some of the stronger charges by a majority verdict but unanimously acquitted him on other charges! No doubt such inconsistencies will be raised at the Allcock appeal.



"I bought them as an investment, but I wear them on special occasions"

AS IN the Allcock trial so once again the shadow of former stockbroker Jonathan Bekhor, alive and living well in California, has been cast adversely over the Elizabeth Forsyth trial.

Bekhor's absence as a witness from the Allcock trial meant there was no mention of Michael Heseltine. Bekhor had initially claimed and then retracted allegations that Heseltine was involved with an offshore share-dealing syndicate. Bekhor produced no evidence and later claimed Allcock made him fabricate the story. Discredited as a witness he was not called by the prosecution as was initially intended. No Bekhor, no Heseltine.

Bekhor's non-appearance also could have influenced the decision to dismiss the remaining corruption charge against Allcock's co-defendant David Shamoon, a Bekhor client. Bekhor claimed Allcock had pressured him to repay £100,000 owed to a Jewish school in London with which Shamoon was connected. The Revenue claimed this was evidence of Allcock helping Shamoon whose tax affairs he had investigated. Shamoon denied the allegations and the case against him collapsed, in part at the committal stage and finally at trial.

Now it appears that Bekhor's earlier non-appearance last year at the Forsyth trial may well have helped the appeal which quashed her conviction for handling £400,000 stolen by her idol Asil Nadir. The court of appeal blamed the trial judge for misdirecting the jury over the absent Bekhor. Bekhor dealt for Nadir and his associates who were engaged in first ramping and then supporting the Polly Peck share price. Most of the £400,000 went to Bekhor to pay for shares.

Bekhor was lined up as a defence witness and may even have come to Britain to testify but in the end he was not called. Lucky for him (more than a few creditors would welcome an opportunity for a private chat) and perhaps lucky for Mrs Forsyth given Bekhor's problems with the truth.

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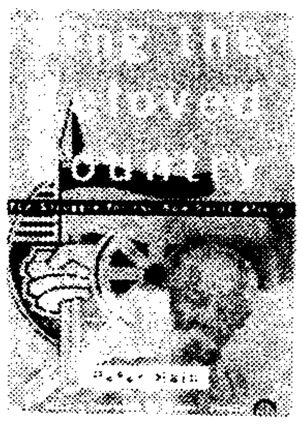

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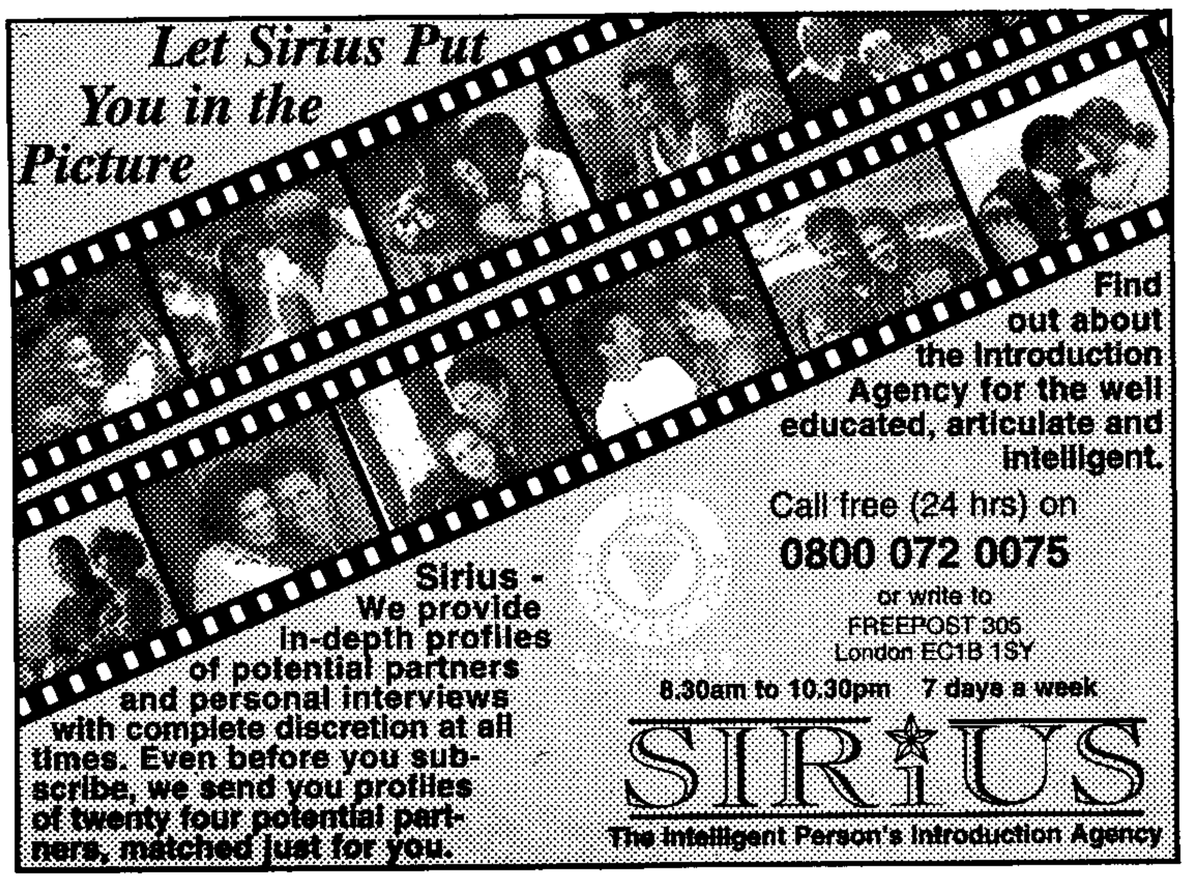
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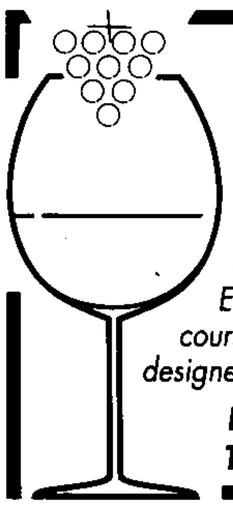

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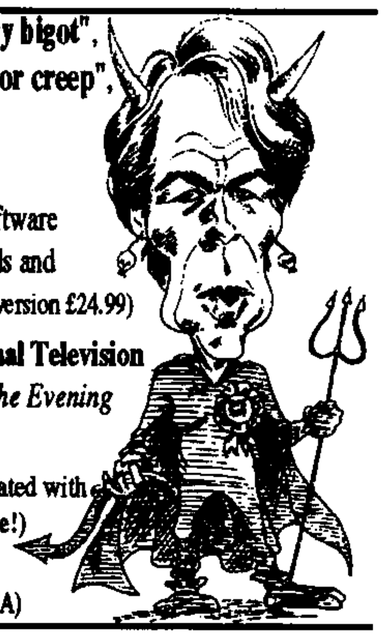

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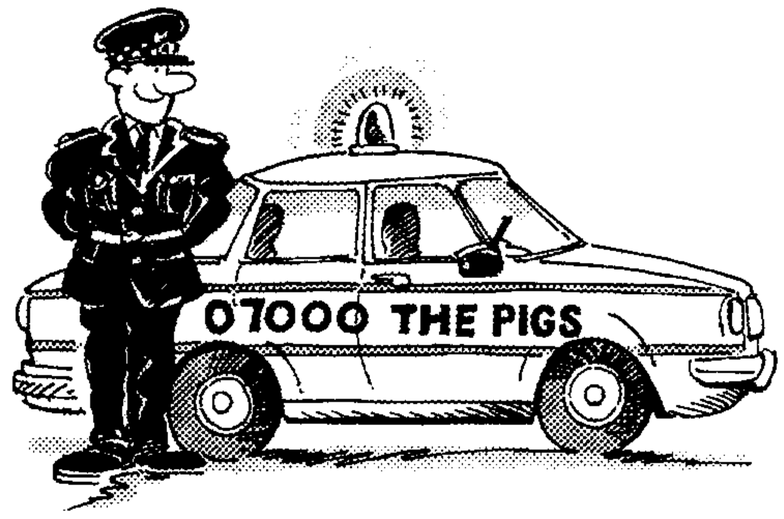

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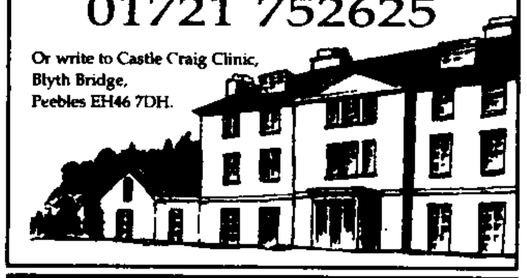

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SPEECHWRITING by MITCH MURRAY. See Page 30.

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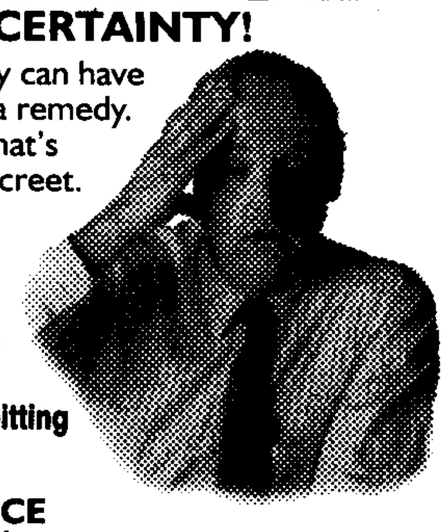

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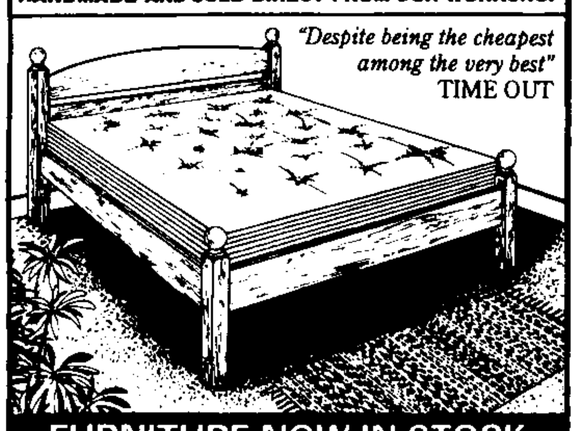

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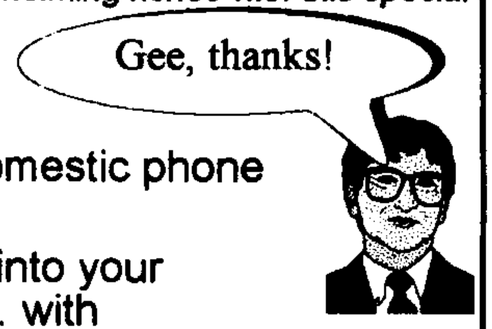

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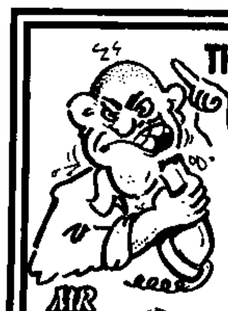

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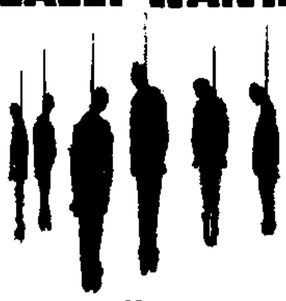

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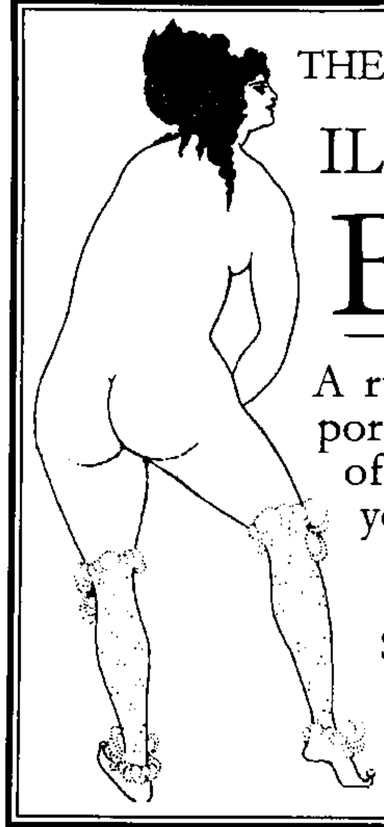

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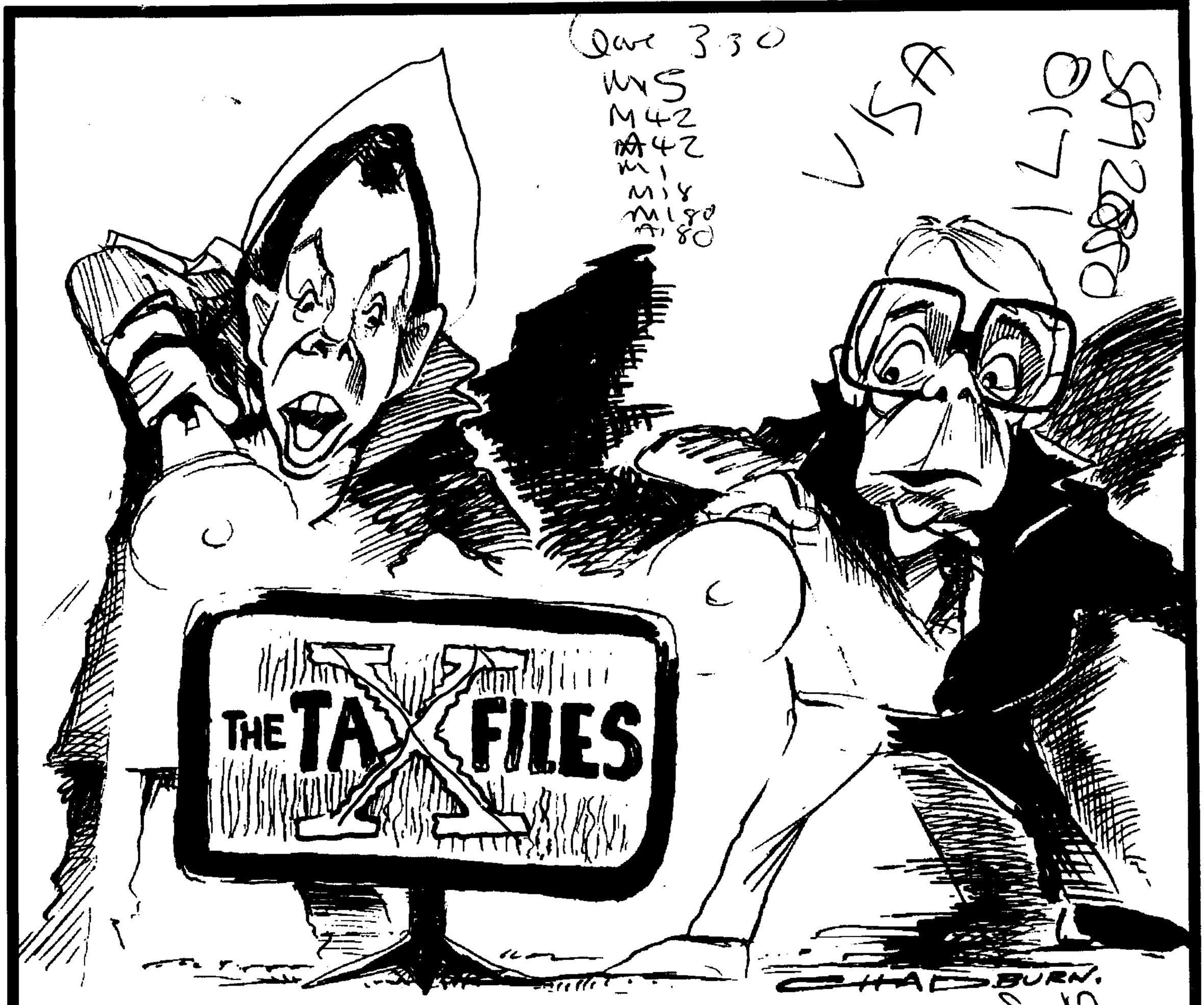

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